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FIRST IN THE WEST

The Story of Henry Kelsey

Discoverer of Canadian Prairies

By James W. Whillans



FIRST IN THE WEST
.....
J. W. Whillans



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HENRY KELSEY

Discovered
The Saskatchewan Prairies
- 1690 -

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First in the West

The Story of Henry Kelsey
Discoverer of Canadian Prairies

By JAMES W. WHILLANS

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INTRODUCTION

By Dr. F. H. Auld, Chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan

All who love the Canadian Prairies must share with Reverend James William Whillans his keen interest in their geology, history and development. For him the discovery of the diaries of Henry Kelsey after they had lain for nearly two centuries in an Old World library was a challenge to achieve for Kelsey the credit of being the first white man to traverse the Canadian prairies. This, Mr. Whillans believed was his rightful due. Hence the 'Campaign for Kelsey' which Mr. Whillans launched in 1952 in which appeared this paragraph:

"Today we remember him in small, obscure ways. Nobody would guess that 'K' stands for Kelsey in the call letters of the Watrous Station. He is virtually unknown amongst us, not only because his diary was lost for so long; but also because no one has been able to locate Deering's Point or prove where he travelled. There is an Historic Sites Monument at The Pas describing Kelsey as the discoverer of the Canadian prairies; but it does not claim that he was at The Pas nor does it give his route to the Plains. Until we can do this, it is difficult to give Kelsey the credit that is his due".

As a part of his campaign, Mr. Whillans personally sought convincing evidence of the authenticity of the Kelsey diary which critics of the Hudson's Bay Company had declared fictitious. He spent some time at The Pas, interviewed informed persons there and elsewhere, and examined remains of trails believed to be Indian routes of travel used by Kelsey in 1690 when he reached the Canadian prairies and passed very close to the site of the University of Saskatchewan if not actually over it.

"First in the West" is a tale well told. The style is pleasing, and the argument of the Author in the interpretation of the Kelsey record is convincing. He reveals Kelsey as an alert and willing apprentice, a courageous and competent explorer and traveller, a capable navigator, a successful trader, negotiator and wise administrator. Kelsey's childhood and the circumstances of his later life are shrouded in mystery; but Mr. Whillans has presented him as an

authentic personality and the peer of other better known explorers who risked great hazards in their penetration of the frontier.

The author of "First in the West" was a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church in Canada who was born in Scotland, educated there and in Canada and served a number of congregations in the Prairie Provinces but principally in Saskatchewan before going to live in British Columbia.

It is fitting that this book should appear in Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee Year when pioneers are being honoured. And, although he would be the first to object, it seems altogether appropriate to regard this treatise on Kelcey as a memorial also to Reverend James William Whillans who in his years of retirement so generously and enthusiastically dedicated himself to this unselfish task. Only hours after he had completed arrangements with his Edmonton publishers, his mortal remains rested in death. But he did not need to see his book in the 'stalls' to feel that his Campaign for Kelcey had ended successfully and that he himself was free to set out on his own last great adventure.

F. HEDLEY AULD.

Regina, Sask.,
April, 1955.

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CHAPTER 1

WHO WAS FIRST ON THE PRAIRIES?

*"Some dauntless heart had braved these wilds
To win this golden plain."*

IT was a lovely day in September, 1905, with a vast blue sky overhead and the first tints of fall on the prairie shrubs and flowers. Riding along a trail on higher ground, northeast of Yorkton, I could see the prairies, bathed in mellow sunlight, stretching far away to the south and west until lost in the autumn haze.

A few days earlier Sir Wilfrid Laurier had been in Edmonton when the Province of Alberta was being set up, and now, the districts of Assiniboa and Saskatchewan having been merged, he was taking part in the celebrations that marked the birth of the Province of Saskatchewan. That afternoon I kept thinking of the inauguration ceremony that was going on at that very hour in Regina.

For over a year, miles of virgin prairie had passed beneath Mac's and me as we went the rounds of the scattered mission charge, and often, as on that day, I would repeat the lines about hearing the oncoming waves of a human sea. Whenever I began to recite verses Mac would stop and start grazing. He knew that the best way to work off my mood was to let me have a good look at the empty prairies around.

That afternoon I imagined that the faint rumble of the coming multitudes became a loud roar. It was easy to think of them as spreading over the plains until the prairies were all fields, and growing food for the hungry world beyond. Inauguration day, in brilliant Indian summer weather, thrilled us all with the promise of a great future for the country. And it was wonderful to have been there with the

My reliable old horse that pulled me about my circuit

first settlers, to have seen the prairie furrows turned with the odd buffalo skull still lying around.

With thoughts of the days to come I would also think of the past, and of the Indians who had roamed the plains for ages before we came. And always, too, wherever I was, I kept wondering who of the white race had first seen the country I rode over, where he came from, where he would be going, and what he would be thinking as he passed along the empty plains.

The thing that most suggested the past to me was the deeply rutted Pelly Trail at Vonda, northeast of Saskatoon, where I was stationed for a summer. On the north were the poles of the first telegraph line in the country, completed in 1876, while immediately on the south was a new railway. Riding along between them I felt more like the last of the freighters than the first of those who were taking their place. The earliest explorers did not seem far away on that old trail. It led in a few miles to the South Saskatchewan, but I had no idea that many years later I would return to its banks, on the trail of the unsung hero who had discovered the western plains.

Afterwards I was at Kinistino, and came to know the famed Carrot River valley in an intimate way, riding here and there in an almost virgin country. Once in a while I visited old Fort à la Corne on the main Saskatchewan. I did not find out then who had discovered the country, and could not know that my mission field in the north had been crossed by the first white man in all the West.

Of course, I had read the story of the intrepid La Vérendrye and his sons. Vérendrye had reached the Red River in 1738, a date that has been regarded as marking the discovery of the prairies. Establishing a post at Portage la Prairie on the Assiniboine, he journeyed south into the Missouri country of the Mandans, an outstanding expedition that brought him back to the Assiniboine.

But it was not evident that La Vérendrye had been in the Saskatchewan country, or that his connection with the Canadian West went beyond the Manitoba plains on the

first prairie level. Verendrye's great exploits seemed to be to the east of our prairies and south in what is now United States territory.

One of the sons, Chevalier Louis-Joseph La Verendrye, ascended the Saskatchewan as far as the Forks in 1749, a journey that has been linked with the discovery of that river. It did not, however, take him out of the bush country along the stream, and apparently none of the early explorers on Lake Winnipeg had reached the western plains. No one seemed to know who had been first on the prairies of the Saskatchewan.

It seemed strange that explorers like Mackenzie, Fraser and Thompson should have crossed the Saskatchewan country, where the prairies must have been discovered at an earlier date, and that these should lack a pathfinder whose name would rank with theirs. School-books told of Cartier, Champlain, Vancouver and others, who had done something to make parts of the country known, so that most of the provinces had a colourful story about how they were discovered and explored. But there was no clear history of the discovery of the prairies, particularly of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Such was the situation when something happened that was little less than an accident, and that threw a flood of light on the shrouded beginnings of our western history. One wet day, early in 1926, not looking for anything special, Mr Archibald Dobbs decided to clean up the spacious library in Castle Dobbs, at Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland. Packed carefully away, he found some papers that had evidently been placed there by an ancestor, Arthur Dobbs, before he went to North Carolina as Governor in 1764.

Sensing their importance, Mr Dobbs turned the papers over to the Public Records Office in Belfast. Here it was found that they comprised the journals of Henry Kelsey of the Hudson's Bay Company, covering a discontinuous period of nearly forty years spent in the service of the Company, with a personal record of drab days and stirring

scenes on Hudson Bay. But the main interest of the papers lies in Kelsey's own story of his discovery of the Canadian prairies during two long journeys in 1890-91

Kelsey had been mentioned in connection with western exploration, but vaguely and in a sentence or two only. One was left with the feeling that while there was a story about his having been on the plains, little attention need be paid to it, and that nothing could be proved.

Now, however, Henry Kelsey, a lad of twenty, stood suddenly forth as the discoverer of our prairies, the first white man to travel the plains and live in the country, to see the buffalo herds and leave a record behind him. Some people thought that if there was anything new it could not be very important at this late date, particularly when linked with the name of an unknown man. But the evidence was against them. The discovery of the prairies proved to be a stirring story of human endurance, courage and achievement, all the more remarkable because it had been hidden for so long.

Overlooking Belfast Lough, Castle Dobbs commands a fine view of the liners that swing at anchor. Thousands of Irish people have embarked there, many of them to begin a new life on the Canadian prairies. They did not know that the white mansion, looking down on them in a friendly farewell, held the long lost story of the discovery of their new home, which it would one day reveal and name the discoverer, Henry Kelsey.

The diaries were found in a coarse paper cover, and comprised 128 handwritten pages, only twenty of which tell the story of Kelsey's prairie journeys. As the Kelsey Papers, these diaries have been published jointly by the Public Archives of Canada and the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, where the original journals are now listed.

To the Hudson's Bay Company, the prairie diary is an authentic record of the travels of its servant, Henry Kelsey, and a vindication of what it had been claiming for nearly

three centuries, all too quietly, regarding the mission on which it had dispatched him on the first journey into the interior.

Historians accepted the new evidence as proof of Kelsey's discovery of the prairies, and schoolbooks began to take notice of the fact. But it was new history, and a great deal had yet to be known about Kelsey's travels, with the result that the people remained almost completely ignorant of Kelsey's explorations and even of his name.

The Kelsey Papers prove, contrary to the common belief, that the West was not discovered from Eastern Canada, but directly from the Old Land. The explanation for this lies in the remarkable expansion of the Atlantic into Hudson Bay, far beyond the St. Lawrence and Lake Superior, giving men in tiny ships an ocean passage to the heart of the continent.

Hence, Henry Kelsey had spent nearly forty years on Hudson Bay, for two years had explored the interior, and had been dead for a decade, before the pathfinders of the East, emerging from a continental wilderness of woods and waters, finally beheld the open prairies of the West.

CHAPTER 2

LAST DOUBTS DISSOLVE

"There is sought at venture, random our desires.

Swings the wheel full circle, brings the eye there.

— Kipling

THERE may still be doubt in some minds regarding Kelsey and his discovery of the prairies despite the finding of the Kelsey Papers. Even the absence of Kelsey's diary until 1926 does not seem to explain why such an important journey should have remained unknown so long. One would think that the news was bound to leak out despite everything that tended to keep it a close secret. It is better to explain everything now than to go on with any lingering doubts, though it means getting ahead of the story by many years.

The explanation lies in a long struggle between powerful interests, a struggle with which Kelsey had no personal connection. The Hudson's Bay Company had been granted wide powers and vast lands in the Charter of 1670, as water tight a document as human ingenuity could contrive. Jealousies were stirred up, many people wanted like privileges, and a determined and sustained attack was made on the validity of the Charter. It was also charged that the Company had not lived up to its obligation to explore the country and prosecute the search for a North West Passage, a vital issue at that time.

The main trouble came after Kelsey's day. Leading the attack was Arthur Dobbs, a man who had some connection with the Company, and who had written a book on the countries around Hudson Bay, which, however, he had not visited. Dobbs was an able and persistent critic and a prolific writer. He denied that Kelsey's journey north of Churchill had taken place, and was equally sceptical of his travels on the inland plains.

Things finally came to a head in a petition embodying all the complaints against the Company. At that time it had

about 120 regular servants in four or five forts on Hudson Bay and had no posts in the interior. The Company was attacked as a "non-user." The Government could no longer ignore the agitation, and in 1748 a Parliamentary Committee of enquiry was set up and sat for many months hearing evidence.

In defence of the charge that it had done no exploring, the Company submitted copies of correspondence between itself and Governor Geyer at Fort York in which it urged that Kelsey be sent inland, and of Geyer's reply that this had been done. Included were reports on Kelsey's progress and of his safe return. It also produced an abridged copy of the diary of Kelsey's 1691 journey. The claim that Kelsey had been sent into the interior had already been disputed, but the Company now rested its case on the evidence of the diary, which it held to be conclusive. Its complacency must have been shattered when it was charged that the journal was a piece of evidence fabricated for the occasion.

A chief witness against the Company was Joseph Robson, who had been in charge of the building of Fort Prince of Wales at Churchill, and who had also spent some time at Fort York. Robson had fallen out with the Company and was vocal in his criticisms of it and of the policies it followed. He evidently had not known about the existence of Kelsey's complete diary until the edited copy was produced at the enquiry, since it is from this latter that he quotes, and not from the fuller journal as found in the Kelsey Papers.

Robson denied that Kelsey had been sent north of Churchill in 1689, and he had evidently not seen the diary covering that trip. He did not believe that Kelsey had travelled into the interior in 1690, since there was no diary of the journey. He does not seem to have been aware of Kelsey's poem telling about his travels that year. His version of Kelsey's 1691 prairie journey, which he said was common on the Bay, was to the effect that Kelsey was a wayward youth who had rebelled against the harsh treat-

ment at the Fort. After having been specially ill-used he ran away with the Indians, with whom he had always been friendly.

Robson's story was that Kelsey returned to the Fort after a year or two with an Indian wife, but refused to enter unless she was allowed to accompany him. Permission was finally granted, and Kelsey was taken back into the service. Soon afterwards the Company, allegedly in collusion with Kelsey, made the claim that it had sent him inland and that he had remained away for two years and had discovered a new country. As for the diary, Robson said he no more believed it to be Kelsey's than he believed it to be his own. The Company, he said, had done nothing to explore the country and had stifled the spirit of adventure in the men.

Most of the above statements are contained in a book which Robson published after the enquiry. On the stand he had been less definite in the charges he made, claiming afterwards that he had been confused at the time.

Many other witnesses, possessed of a strange assortment of information and misinformation, testified against the Company at the enquiry, alleging that the land around the Bay was suitable for farming, that navigable rivers there led to populous districts, and that the Company, not wanting this to be known, had sent no one into the interior. Meanwhile the Company had done little to muster the evidence available in its favour. One is left with the impression that it made a poor case for itself. The full Kelsey diary would have carried more conviction than the version that was submitted.

One of Robson's stories in the book is about a fight that Kelsey and an Indian had with two grizzly bears. But there were no such bears near the Bay, nor on the lower Saskatchewan. To have seen them Kelsey must have been at least as far away as the parkland prairies. Also Kelsey went "off with distant Indians," staying away a year or more, and must therefore have seen a new country. Taken together,

Robson's statements indicate that Kelsey did make a journey of discovery, commissioned or otherwise, and go far to support what he was trying to refute.

It was impossible to find anyone who had been in the interior and who could corroborate Kelsey's journey. But one would think that a careful examination of Kelsey's diary, even in its shortened form, would have led anyone to the conclusion that the trip could not have been imagined by a boy who had never left Hudson Bay, nor have been concocted by some clerk in a London office.

Robson had a strong personal grudge against the Company. He arrived on the Bay long after the discovery of the plains and had never met Kelsey. It seems strange that he should ever have been regarded as a reliable and impartial witness, and that his word should have been accepted by historians and writers in preference to the record left by Governor Lyster. Robson had no access to official files and he cannot be trusted to tell anything he may have heard that tended to establish the Company's claim that it had sent Kelsey into the interior. Dobbs drew largely on Robson in his campaign against the Company. Robson's book became the basis of what has been known as the Kelsey Tradition, the baleful shadow of which still lies heavily upon us, and modern writers have not altogether escaped its influence.

A chief casualty of the investigation was the reputation of Henry Kelsey, deceased, an innocent victim of the bitter struggle. Portrayed as an undisciplined youth, the willing tool of unscrupulous fur traders, and denounced as an imposter whose travels were imagined, Kelsey seemed branded for all time. The Company, never having made anything of Kelsey or his discoveries, in an amazingly short time forgot all about him.

The report of the enquiry leaves the impression that even if the Committee believed that Kelsey's journey had taken place, it was not convinced that it had been of any importance. But the Government was anxious for its own purposes, that it might have a claim to the country, to uphold the rights and position of the Company, which was left in possession of its Charter. But it had been shaken by

the long enquiry. Doubts had been raised, even in the minds of its friends, regarding the veracity of Company records and its claims to discovery. The public was confused and a great deal of suspicion remained.

To us Kelsey's journey is important because it discovered the prairies, but to those connected with it the added business it led to was important, and discovery as such little or nothing. True to his commission Kelsey did not regard himself as an explorer, nor did he ever claim to have been first on the plains. Thirty years later he recalled his two years in the interior as having greatly increased trade. There is no word of his having found a great river and a new land. If his Directors were grateful to him it would be because of his success as a trader rather than as a traveller in a new country.

It ought to be said that Dobbs made no mention of Kelsey before the Parliamentary Committee. By that time he had read the diary, likely in the unabridged form in the Kelsey Papers which may then have been in his possession, and he had no doubt reached the conclusion that the record was genuine and could not be answered. Though strongly opposed to the Company, Dobbs was not a man to seek his ends by denying evident truth. In the end it was out of his own library that the truth about Kelsey was established.

The story of the discovery of the prairies rested where the Parliamentary enquiry had left it, until the finding of the Kelsey Papers in our own day. This happened in such fortuitous circumstances that one can almost see the workings of a fate that had determined at last to right a great wrong to an innocent lad, and give to the people of the West the missing first chapter of their own history.

Long silent now are the champions on both sides, and one who never did battle with any of them remains as the victor—Henry Kelsey. He would be amazed to know that he should be remembered as the discoverer of the prairies.

CHAPTER 3

THE UNKNOWN CONTINENT

"Many a woe-wrack and tangled wilderness
Has found his lonely steps and he has sought,
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men
His food and rest

—Shelley

IN 1673, or seventeen years before Kelsey's journey into the interior, Joliet and Marquette had discovered the Mississippi from the St. Lawrence. They followed downstream for a great distance but were never more than a mile or so from the banks. However, they did see the prairies and the buffalo and they reached the mouth of the Missouri. In 1682, La Salle completed the voyage down to the Gulf of Mexico.

A great valley lying between Hudson Bay and the Gulf of Mexico is the lowest part of the continent, and in it the Mississippi runs south and the Red and Nelson Rivers run north. The vast plains of the West drain eastward into this continental trough. Spaniards from the south had been in the deserts and mountains of the Southwest but in Kelsey's day no white man had travelled west of the central valley.

Though the trail of the first pioneers had reached the Mississippi, like a long finger pointing to the west, most of the country to the east and all of it to the north remained unknown. Intendant Jean Talon kept sending out parties from Quebec to explore and take possession of the continent. An elaborate ceremony with the raising of a huge cross at Sault Ste. Marie had claimed all the country to the west. But the Red River and the prairies in Canada were undiscovered, and even the approach to them, the Lake of the Woods, had not yet been visited.

Apart from being a challenge and a thorn in their side in the competition for pelts, the English posts on Hudson Bay had no interest in or connection with the French settlements on the St. Lawrence. A great ferment was stirring the infant colonies there, and adventurous spirits were planning

to push still deeper and wider into the unknown West. But New France had trouble enough nearer home from hostile Indians and the menace of white settlers to the south, as well as internal divisions in the struggle for trade and the power that came from royal favour. When Kelsey was on the prairies the massacre of Lachine took place, and a French Indian force pillaged Schenectady in what is now New York State. So New France had internal and external distractions that limited the explorations it could undertake in the wilderness of the West.

Nor did the English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard mean anything to the men on Hudson Bay. Their connections were all with the Old Land and they sailed their ships direct to London. Ice conditions in the Bay shut them off completely for most of the year from the outside world, their only contact being the few ships that arrived in the late summer.

At that time England and Scotland were still separate countries, though the crowns had been united since 1603. The landing of William of Orange was fresh in the minds of Englishmen, and wars with France were almost continuous. The industrial revolution had not yet begun and the population of England was around six millions. The Massacre of Glencoe took place early in 1692, the year Kelsey returned from the prairies.

In June, 1792, or just 100 years after Kelsey completed his discovery of the prairies, Vancouver was anchored in English Bay, on whose shores now stands the city that bears his name. A year later Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific at the end of the first transcontinental journey. Lewis and Clarke completed the first crossing south of the line in 1805. Even at that late date, well over 100 years after Kelsey's discovery, only the first lone trails had been blazed across the prairies and mountains of the west.

For a long time after Kelsey's day nothing more was known about the interior. Joseph La France, a half breed, made the first journey from the east to Hudson Bay by the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg in 1739-42. La France was interviewed in the Old Land by Dobbs who reports him as speaking of Lake Outinipique, on the west

side of which lived the Assinibouels of the Meadows. The Indians made syrup from the sap of the birch tree and boiled it until it became black and solid. It was used with meat. When a beast was killed in the woods it was left, and the hunter made a direct line for the camp, breaking off small branches and leaving them on the ground pointing to the animal so that the women would be able to find it.

La France told of a great gathering of the Indians each spring near the north end of the lake, Winnipeg. Here, they prepared for the journey to trade at the Bay. Canoes took about three days to make and were very small, holding only two men and 100 beaver pelts. As these light craft were unable to stand against winds and waves, the routes always followed the sheltered waters. The journey to the Bay took a long time as the men lived by hunting on the way.

This is an interesting and accurate account of the country around Lake Winnipeg and of the customs of the Indians there, and it is contemporary with the arrival of La Vérendrye on the Red River in 1738. The record has a general interest for us here, though Kelsey did not visit Lake Winnipeg, and it came half a century after he had been on the western plains, a different country with other Indians. The canoes described by R. M. Ballantyne a hundred years later were of the same size as those used in La France's day, and held only two or three men. There were larger canoes, but it was in these small craft that the Indians came to trade on Hudson Bay. It would be the same type of canoe that Kelsey used in his travels.

Such, briefly, was the situation regarding western exploration before Kelsey made his memorable journey into the interior, and such is the setting of that journey in relation to the later explorations that carried the white man westward to the Pacific Ocean.

When the Company had been established for twenty years on the shores of Hudson Bay, trading with Indians from the interior it still knew nothing of the country from which they came. The mighty Nelson at the door was evidence of the vastness of the land from which it gathered its waters. The Directors were anxious to learn something

about the interior, mainly because of their trade, and kept offering rewards to the Company's servants who would travel into the country.

Two practiced French pathfinders, Grosseillers ("Gooseberry" to the Company) and Grimard were engaged for the purpose of opening up the interior and increasing trade. Kelsey tells us that "they did not go 200 miles from ye factory. It was the same with others. The dreaded wilderness was not penetrated beyond a point from which a safe return could be made. Governor Geyer held out every inducement to his men but had to report to London. "Nor will any of your Servants travel up Country "

But it must be remembered that, coming straight out from the green fields of England, these men stepped directly into a country and climate more terrifying and cruel than anything the pathfinders of the St. Lawrence knew. They were entirely without the experience of men brought up in the country and at home in the bush. Life was hard enough on the bleak shores of Hudson Bay where they had huts, fuel, food and the companionship of each other. Small wonder that men shrank from abandoning what security they had to wander with the Indians 1,000 miles away. But in the end, as was bound to happen, one came forward to take up the challenge of the wilderness.

He was the lad Henry Kelsey - a David with a stout young heart pitting himself against a Goliath, the endless leagues of spruce and swamp and all the terrors of the unknown and dreaded continent. It was the Directors in London who prompted the Governor regarding Kelsey, having learned that he was an active lad and delighted in the company of the natives. The report that went back was to the effect that Kelsey "Cheerfully undertook the Journey up into the Country."

The Company's trade was with the Nayhaythaways (Crees), who were found in the wooded country around Hudson Bay and with the Stones (Amuniboines) who came from the interior. The two tribes were allies and worked together. The Naywatams were a remote tribe, about whom nothing was known. They did not trade at the Bay and were the enemy of the other two tribes. The Company

was continually hearing of the wars that went on between the tribes in the interior and Kelcey was to visit the Nay-watames, make peace between them and the other Indians, and invite the former to come and trade furs for goods. If there was to be more trade, the Company held that there would first have to be peace amongst the tribes.

With Kelcey consenting, the stage was finally set for the first attempt to penetrate into the empty continent, the plains on which millions of people are today working out their destiny under bright skies, in peace and with high hopes.

CHAPTER 4

THE BOY HENRY KELSEY

*"With great things charged he shall not hold
Aloud if great occasion rise
But serve, till harmessed, as of old
The days that are the destined."*

—Kipling

HENRY KELSEY was born about 1670, the year the Hudson's Bay Company received its Charter. At present, practically nothing is known about his antecedents or youth, but the indications are that he belonged to London. There were men of the name of Kelsey in his day, seafarers and Thames pilots, and he may have been related to them. The ease with which Kelsey later mastered the difficult art of navigation and became a qualified mariner would be natural to one who had the sea in his blood.

It has been said that Kelsey was a waif from the London streets, but there seems to be no evidence to support this belief. And it would have been nothing against him even if he had been left an orphan and brought up in an institution. No doubt, however, his people were in humble circumstances.

Whatever his home life may have been, Kelsey was properly trained and given a good education for a boy of his years in those times. He later became proficient in languages and mathematics, a foundation for which he would not have gained aimlessly wandering the streets of London. Also he was put into an apprenticeship in a day when boys like himself were not trained for anything special and usually became unskilled labourers. Someone must have had his welfare at heart and planned for his future. No doubt Kelsey was a spirited youth, active and ambitious, but there is nothing to show that he was wayward and undisciplined, a problem youth, as has been imagined by some.

As a boy Kelsey probably knew the lower Thames well, and we can imagine him spending long hours watching the

ships being loaded and unloaded. He may have seen those that were under charter to the Hudson's Bay Company as they were being filled with a strange assortment of trade goods for the Redmen in the far West.

Any boy would be fascinated by such a sight, and by vessels with tall masts being proofed against sea and weather while the smell of hot tar floated up to his nostrils. Then the day would come, amid much shouting and excitement, when the ships would leave and disappear in the mist down the river. It was natural that the boy over whom they had cast a spell, should sail with them before long.

The spring of 1684 was auspicious for the Hudson's Bay Company. A large dividend had been declared, Pierre Radisson, the great pathfinder of New France, had just returned to its service after an absence of some years, and three ships were under charter to make the voyage to Hudson Bay—the JOHN AND THOMAS, the HAPPY RETURN and the LUCY.

It was on this wave of optimism that Henry Kelsey was engaged as an apprentice on April 14th, 1684. He was about fourteen years of age. His salary for the four years was to be "eight pounds and two shettes of apparell," the money to be paid at the end of his apprenticeship. There is a record of a payment to Capt. John Outlaw of the LUCY, "For disbursements for Henry Kelsey one of the Compa apprentices, five pounds twelve shillings."

Evidently an advance had been made to cover the expense of Kelsey's outfit, which is listed as consisting of, "A bed, rug, 4 blew shirts, 2 p stockings, 2 handkerchiefs, 4 neck cloths, a shutte of Clothes, 2 p drawers and 2 waste coats."

Kelsey sailed on the LUCY from Gravesend on the 17th of May. It would be with mixed feelings that he left home and friends and slipped down the estuary of the Thames with the green fields on either hand, which he was not to see again for over eight years, and then out into the North Sea. He was probably thoroughly seasick and unable to take an

interest in anything as the little ship rolled her way, with bellowing sails, up the east coast of England, with the land clearly in view

There would be a halt in the north of Scotland for water and other supplies. Then on across the Atlantic, and at last through the difficult passage in Hudson Straits and into Hudson Bay, a voyage that took many weeks. The LUCY was the first ship to arrive at the trading post on the west shore.

The HAPPY RETURN was held up by ice, and Radisson and some other men on board made the last sixty miles in an open boat, dragging it across the floes and going steadily for forty eight hours until they reached Port Nelson. Kelsey was not, as has sometimes been stated, on the same ship with Radisson. The older man often credited with kindling the ambition of the young apprentice to become an explorer of the unknown continent. On the Bay Kelsey would see Radisson, even if he did not have opportunities to associate with such a great man. But it is doubtful, if, as years passed, he needed any greater challenge to explore the country than the untrodden wilderness around.

As soon as the ships came to anchor men swarmed ashore, glad to be free after being cooped up in cramped quarters for so long. All was excitement as the season opened. Men eagerly read letters from home. The days that followed were busy as goods were brought up out of the dark holds—guns, flints, powder, kettles, twine, chisels, saws and nets, as well as blankets, clothing, beads and tobacco. The LUCY also carried nearly 3,000 bricks and a large quantity of salt beef.

Kelsey would be lost in the bustle and little attention would be paid to him. Perhaps he was lonely and homesick, and wondered how he could ever fit into such a strange life. But he would be busy throughout the long day, and would gradually become accustomed to the new land with its many interests. He would be proud to have a small part in the great things that were being done.

When the ships had been unloaded they were filled with bundles of assorted furs. As the summer waned they

left for home, and when the last sail had faded across the Bay the long white silence descended on the barren coast.

Kelsey would then settle down to the ordinary life and menial tasks of a junior in the service. It would be a daily "telling of beaver" in the draughty warehouse where pelts were sorted and counted. There were frequent excursions to the "wooding" where fuel was cut to feed the hungry fires. A gun was always kept handy there and as many as fifty partridges a day would be shot to augment the ash meat diet. An occasional deer and bear also came their way.

According to R. M. Ballantyne, the author, who spent several years at Fort York over a hundred years ago, the summer woods were full of cranberries, black and red currants and gooseberries. Immense flocks of plover and snipe visited the marshes. Ptarmigan were abundant but not very palatable, though a constant dish on the winter table. The canoes were five to six yards long and held three men, three blankets and three small bundles. When holes were made in them they were patched with amazing speed, sewed with fine roots and proofed with tree gum. The things Ballantyne describes would not have changed since Kelsey's day.

Kelsey's diary frequently mentions the spring and fall migrations of vast numbers of geese. Men would lie out in the blinds for days shooting until they were called back from the marshes by a signal from the fort. Goose hunting continued until the late fall when the "River fastened against the Fort" and the flocks flew south. "We come across such entries as 'today set 21 hooks for fish' " "Some came home from ye fourteens & brought 20 trout. I sent 3 men home with 2 deers heads & some deers flesh."

Life was hard and often dangerous on the Bay, and Kelsey's later diaries record the death of several men in one week. He tells of some bodies being found in a swamp long after the men had disappeared. A party sent to look for two missing men found a bloody shirt and a bone. Likely the men had been attacked by wolves.

The Company had established itself at several places on Hudson Bay, particularly on the west side at the mouth of two rivers that entered the sea close together—the

mighty Nelson and the Hayes. Port Nelson was on the larger stream and Fort York the main depot, was on the Hayes. Kelsey seems to have spent most of his six years before his journey into the interior at Fort York.

The little Company at Fort York lived the life of old England so far as this was possible in entirely alien surroundings. The amateur poets would find it even more difficult to keep up any semblance of the home life. Regulations required Divine Service to be conducted each Sunday. But Kelsey's diary shows little difference in the days and on December 25th 1696 he notes that they burned the body of an Indian who had died the previous day. There is no mention of Christmas or Divine Service.

The Company's rule was feudal and paternal. At all times it demanded loyalty and absolute obedience. Discipline was strict and it was a mortal sin to be caught in a private trade. Perhaps only with an iron rule could order and morale have been maintained in the wilds where men lived an unnatural life cut off from the normal influences of home and family life. The Company gave men the only security possible in the wilderness. If it asked much it had also much to give and men could depend on its protection so long as they remained in favour. A stern rule in a stern land it broke many but Kelsey was young and adaptable and became part of the system. It fitted him for what lay ahead.

Kelsey finished his apprenticeship in 1688. That year some Indians who had been sent to the post at Severn, some hundreds of miles down the coast, failed to get through. The summer was passing and it was imperative that the message be delivered. Kelsey was dispatched with an Indian companion. Making all haste he was back in a month with a reply. It was a notable piece of work and duly impressed the Governor, who knew where to turn when an arduous mission had to be undertaken.

Kelsey's next commission was in the summer of 1689, when he was sent north to try to establish trade relations with the Indians beyond Churchill. With an Indian companion he sailed north but sixty miles beyond Churchill ice conditions were so bad that Kelsey begged the captain to

put him ashore that he might continue on foot. This was agreed to and on June 27th a cache was established against Kelsey's return from the north.

On the second day of his land journey Kelsey's dog ran all the way back to the ship and he followed it, returning with another one. The first dog must have had an idea of what lay ahead. An abandoned canoe was found, the only sign of human life they were to see. Tortured by clouds of mosquitoes, they had nothing that would burn and make a smudge. Traveling north not far from the sea, they encountered thick fogs that were caused by the offshore ice. The weather was cold and wet. "At noon it rained hard having no shelter but ye heavens for a Canope nor no wood to light a fire." Conditions were all against them and the Indian kept complaining; the season was too far advanced, the natives had gone. Kelsey's companion was superstitious and afraid of the Indians who belonged to the tribe they were seeking.

On July 9th two "Buffills" were seen and one was killed for food. It is not difficult to recognize the muskox of the Barrera from the following description:

"They are ill shapen Beast their body being bigger than an ox leg and foot ye same. . . horns joynd together upon their forehead come down ye side of their heads and turn up and hair near a foot long."

The Indian continued to be difficult—Kelsey was "a fool and not sensible of ye dangers." Next morning he refused to go on. Kelsey was disgusted, but had no alternative but to turn back. In two weeks they had tramped 140 miles north from the ship and were faced with a 200 mile walk all the way back to Churchill! It was a dangerous and difficult journey. Day after day rain fell, and on the treeless tundra a shelter of moss was made for such poor protection as it afforded.

Reaching the river where they had been ashore, they replenished their supplies from the cache. Then a raft was made for the crossing, but all the wood available was not sufficient to float two men and the goods. So Kelsey "Put ye Boy and things on it and swimm'd over myself being very cold." The solution of any difficulty usually depended on something that Kelsey did himself.

On July 19th they reached the woods in a hard driving rain, and Kelsey records the first shelter they had known in three weeks. A raft had to be made to cross another river, but the far bank was found to be an island and a new raft had to be made to reach the south shore. It was a desperate venture:

"It being dreadful to behold ye falls we had to pass Considering we had nothing to tye our raft but small Log line & were fort to shoot 3 Desperate falls ye raft struck upon two of ym but gott safely over "

On the 28th they reached some high rocks overlooking the Churchill River and saw the ship riding at anchor Kelsey's laconic entry for the following day reads "Today I rested on board "

Kelsey was deeply disappointed that his first long trip for the Company had not yielded some practical results, and he blamed the Indian for the failure and threatened to go to England and indict him before the Directors. On arriving at Fort York he told the Governor how he had been served by his companion. The reply was that he had done all he could and that nothing more had been expected from him.

If Kelsey could see no results from his trip there were things that future generations would discover and remember. He was the first white man to travel the Barrens and to see and describe that strange animal there, the musk ox. His diary shows that after leaving the ship he made a journey north and then south of well over 300 miles. It is the first recorded land journey of any extent by a white man in what is now the Province of Manitoba. It might also be claimed as the first such journey in the entire West.

The northern boundary of the Prairie Provinces is less than 100 miles north of Churchill, so that in travelling 300 miles north of there Kelsey must have been well into the present North West Territories. This would make another first for him.

The boy Henry Kelsey had already distinguished himself. Still greater things lay ahead for him.

CHAPTER 5

THE GREAT ADVENTURE—THE JOURNEY OF 1690

"He shall have hope and honour,
Prove trust and courage stout
To hold him to his purpose
Through the enlight'ed dark."
—Bliss Carver

IT was a bright morning at Fort York on June 12th, 1690. Some Stone Indians had arrived from the interior a day or two before and had traded their pelts for guns, blankets, kettles, tobacco and trinkets that would catch the eye of the women and children. Now they were all ready to leave for home.

Governor Geyer had made an arrangement that one of his young men travel back with them. He was Henry Kelsey, well known to the tribesmen, who spoke their language, could live as they lived and was able to paddle all day with the best of them. He could take his full share on the trail and was welcomed in their midst. They had brought back the white man's goods and stories about the big canoes with wings, but to return with a white man's boy would be of more than a passing interest in the teepees at home.

The Directors, aware of the dangers from both man and nature to which the lad would be exposed, had urged the Governor not to trust the Indians too much, and to pledge them to look after him. It is clear that the Governor had an understanding with them regarding this. Kelsey was to be his man in their midst. They were to obey him, protect him and aid him in every way. No doubt it was going to be worth their while to make Kelsey one of themselves, and to see that he got safely back.

There would be little ceremony as Kelsey left Fort York—nothing more than a few goodbyes and a handshake from the Governor, with a last word about the importance of starting a flood of furs to the post. Then the canoes would push out into the Hayes. With paddles flashing in the sun they would soon disappear round the bend.

It would be a year before any news of Kelsey could

come back, and likely longer before they saw him. And he might not return. Survival in the midst of tribal feuds and all the hazards of the wilds was an open question. The unknown and dreaded continent had swallowed the adventurous lad, and time only would tell the story.

Kelsey records his departure thus:

"Then up ye River I with heavy heart
Did take my way & from all English part
To live amongst ye natives of this place
If God permits me for one two years space."

This is one of the few allusions to a depression of his spirits. But it would not last for long. Kelsey's natural hopefulness and a delight in adventure would soon take over. And there was the sense of duty. He had been asked to go, on high honour, and he would discharge his trust at all costs.

The Indians took Kelsey by the Hayes and Fox Rivers, and by portages to Bear and Trout Lakes. Cross Lake, a widening of the Nelson River, was reached. Beyond it the Minago River was ascended, the route being well to the north of Lake Winnipeg and leading into Moose Lake.

After leaving the coast, plain the way led across the Precambrian Shield, in which we have found great wealth. It was a forbidding country of lakes, rivers, outcropping rocks and small evergreen trees. Game was always scarce, men frequently starved there, and they all hurried on, paddling and portaging.

After many days a clay belt was reached, and at once Kelsey would notice the larger trees. He had entered our evergreen forest. In it, and not far ahead, just beyond Moose Lake, lay the first of his great discoveries, the Saskatchewan River.

Broader than the estuary of the Thames at Westminster, flowing swifter than the scour of tidefall there, the river drew its strength from a thousand snowy peaks and its colour from the plains it crossed. Having left the

kindlier prairies, it had taken on the savage nature of the bush and swamp country in which Kelsey found it—a country that is still an unpeopled wilderness.

Henry Kelsey had reached the great River of the West, the river that drains all the western plains and that crosses the entire width of the three Prairie Provinces. For ages it had been known to only a few wandering Redmen, and now for the first time a white man gazed on its tawny flood.

Behind Kelsey lay a maze of waterways, but he would sense that the Saskatchewan could hardly be just another stream. He would judge from its direction, and would know from the Indians, that it came from the land of the tribe he sought. Its importance would be indicated by its size and speed.

It was no part of Kelsey's commission from the Company to discover new rivers, but a man of his sensitive nature must have been moved by the lordly Saskatchewan. The feeling that awes and silences one on the first sight of a great or historic river would grip the lad as he looked out on the sweep of the virgin stream. He must have been aware that he was the first man from the outside world to see the river. Thus would be a deep personal satisfaction, even if not a gratification springing from the performance of a duty to his masters.

As Kelsey stroked his way upstream, the low banks and bushes on either side showed signs of recent high water, the June floods from the mountain snows. In a day or so he came to the first high ground and beached his canoe. He had reached an Indian village where many families awaited the arrival of their friends who had traded at the Bay. Naming the place Deering's Point, Kelsey laid claim to all the country that lay beyond. History had come to the Saskatchewan River.

Kelsey's estimate that he had travelled at least 600 miles southwest from Hudson Bay is reasonable. He had been a month on the way, and states that he had reached the borders of the land of the Stone Indians with whom he

was travelling. Continuing his journey by water, Kelsey before long abandoned his canoe and completed the long journey to the prairies on foot.

The first part of Kelsey's rhyme tells of some of his experiences during the journey and of his reactions to these.

"Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd
Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd
In this same desert where Ever yt I have been
Nor wilt thou me be woe without yt thou had seen
The Emynent Dangers that did often me attend
But still I lived in hopes yt once it would amend
And makes me free from hunger & from Cold
Likewise many other things wch I cannot here unfold
For many times I have often been oppress'd
With fears & Cares yt I could not take my rest
Because I was alone & no friend could find
And once yt in my travels I was left behind
Which struck fear & terror into me
But still I was resolv'd this same country for to see
Although through many dangers I did pass
Hoped still to undergo ym at the Last
Now considering yt it was my dismal fate
For to repent I thought it now to late "

To describe his feelings and conditions Kelsey here employs words which he does not use elsewhere—such as cares, fears, hardship, danger and cold. He speaks of his lack of friends and of his solitary life in the midst of others, of the terror that gripped him when he was left behind and feared that he might perish miserably in the wilderness.

Where some of you now live in towns and homes surrounded by peaceful fields, Kelsey has lain awake on the ground at night amid soundly sleeping Indians, wondering how long things could go on as they were and what new danger the day would bring forth. In the morning he would rise with the others and, after a scant breakfast, begin another day's march deeper into the unknown.

There were "Emynent Dangers" and other things of which he does not speak, but which he tells us we would

not believe unless we saw them ourselves. Our imagination can have free rein here and think of any burden and pain to mind and body, any worry and distress—things we would ordinarily deem as unlikely to happen or impossible to bear. And it was not just in one place and at one time that he suffered but "Wherever I have been."

Kelsey's recital has an Apostolic ring and is more than an echo of St. Paul in 2 Cor. II: "In Journeyings often", "In perils of waters"; "In perils of the heathen"; "In perils in the wilderness"; "In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides these things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily."

When Kelsey considered the many things that oppressed him and the still worse things that might come, he wondered how he had so lightly taken up the challenge of the wilderness. And he concluded, rightly enough, that he could only go on, no matter what lay ahead. "But to repent I thought it now too late." Many people have rued coming to the country after a run of bad years, but have found that they could only stay and see what happened. As with Kelsey the first choice in the end turned out to be best for most of them.

As the journey proceeds Kelsey tells how the country changed:

"The ground begins for to be dry with wood
Popple & birch with ash thats very good
For the Natives of this place wch knows
No use of Better than their wooden Bows."

It would be the Green or Prairie Ash that Kelsey alludes to, the only variety found in the country. Most people would have recorded that the Indians made their bows from wood, but Kelsey was observant to note that the wood was ash.

The rhyme goes on to describe the land as he passed through it to the plains:

"Which hither part is very thick of wood
Affords small nutts with cherries very good
Thus it continues till you leave ye woods behind
And then you have beast of severall kind
The one is a black a Buffallo great "

This is the earliest account of the country, as Kelsey would find it on the way in from Hudson Bay. First, the heavy evergreen forests of the north, then the poplar grove parklands with such shrubs as Saskatoons and choke cherries, the wild fruits of the prairies. Finally, the open plains on which the buffalo then roamed. It is easily recognized as the country we know today.

At the end of his long journey Kelsey made a peace pact in September, the tribes agreeing to be friendly and the remote Indians promising to come and trade at the Bay. Almost at once one tribe killed some of the others and the pact was broken. Kelsey closes the poem by relating how he returned to Deering's Point and erected a cross to prove that he had been there and claimed the country.

Robeson tells us that many stories were told of Kelsey's exploits and travels, and he records the only two that have come down to us. One was about an encounter that Kelsey and an Indian had with two grizzly bears. They came suddenly upon the animals and had no more than time to take shelter, the Indian in a tree and Kelsey in some tall willows. The bears made for the Indian and Kelsey fired and killed one. The other bear then made a rush in the direction of the gunshot, but failing to find Kelsey returned to the tree. Kelsey fired again and killed the second bear.

For this exploit Kelsey became known as **MIS TOP ASHISH**, or the Little Giant. His fame spread across the plains with the story told by many a campfire. He had proved himself a hero by killing no less than two grizzlies, the fiercest beast they knew. Kelsey was the little man with the stout heart. Incidentally, this is perhaps the only note we have on Kelsey's personal appearance. He was the Little Giant, and one would judge not tall and robust, but slightly built and under medium height. Or the name might have been a term of endearment and have referred to Kelsey's youth—he was only twenty at the time and may have looked

even younger. But it is not likely that they would have called him little if he had been a big boned, husky lad. If not tall, he would be strong, like and active.

We do not know the cast of Kelsey's features or whether he was dark or fair, but he was able to identify himself so completely with the Indians that one suspects nature had been of some assistance. A fair man would have attracted attention in their midst, and it seems probable that Kelsey may have been dark and have worn his hair in long black locks as they did. He was probably hard to distinguish from an Indian when he returned from the prairies.

Another story told by Robson is about the Indians leaving Kelsey asleep and of his waking up and finding that a fire in the grass, likely caused by the camp fire they had left, had burned the stock off his gun. He got to work with a knife on a piece of wood and re stocked the weapon. There is no mention of this incident in the diary. It evidently happened during Kelsey's first journey and is likely the experience he refers to in the poem:

"And once yt in my travels I was left behind
Which struck fear & terror into me "

If it was the same experience then Kelsey was not only left alone in the empty wilderness, he was left with a ruined gun and with no means of defence or of procuring food. No wonder he was terror-stricken. Kelsey must have been exhausted and in a dead sleep to let the fire creep so near that it destroyed his gun, which would be lying at his side. It has been imagined that his clothes caught fire and that he himself was burned. Probably the Indians had called him and had gone on believing that he was awake when they saw him stir.

There are only a few words to tell us of this incident, but how much they suggest about the ingenious mind, the clever fingers and the stout heart that refused to believe the worst and that saved him in a desperate situation. Kelsey must often have got himself and others out of difficulties when only a cool head and prompt action could make the most of a scant opportunity. It is to be regretted that so few of the many stories said to have been current

about Kelsey, particularly those relating to his prairie travels, have come down to us.

Incidentally, if Robeson's story about Kelsey having an Indian wife is true, it is not easy to understand how a faithful spouse would go on and leave her man sound asleep. She would likely have received more than a talking to from an Indian husband for such a lapse from plain wifely duty. It is also Kelsey's own story that at times he "was alone and no friend could find." One wonders how this could happen to a man with a wife at his side.

The poem is the earliest record of the white race on the plains. Outstanding in the human story is the stark courage with which Kelsey faced the ever-present dangers and difficulties on the long prairie trail in his search for peace amongst the tribes. The story is all the more effective because it is unadorned and modestly told.

Kelsey brought with him the original spirit of the West, a combination of fortitude in present straits and an abiding faith in the future. It is the spirit of the pioneers, and has pulled the West through trials brought on by drought, rust, frost, depressions and low prices. Such faith and fortitude have always proved greater than the troubles the people have had to meet, as they did in the case of the discoverer of the country.

Such is the story of the first journey of a white man to the western plains. It is found in the poem of ninety lines, only about half of which tell of the actual journey. The record is too vague and scanty to enable us to determine where Kelsey travelled. For further information we must turn to the fuller diary which he kept during his second summer on the plains. But first, there are some problems that must be solved.

CHAPTER 6

HOW THE KELSEY PUZZLE WAS SOLVED

*"We'll find the long lost trail he made
Where prairie sunsets glow
Walk and camp with his brave young shade
And talk of the long ago."*

AS soon as Kelsey arrived on the lower Saskatchewan he halted at and named a certain place Deering's Point. Sir Edward Deering was a Director of the Company who became Deputy Governor the following year, and to honour him Kelsey passed over both the Governor and the Deputy Governor. He later put Deering's name on a cross and called him "my master." There must have been a good reason for the honour Kelsey paid to Deering at the earliest opportunity. To be given the name of an important man, Deering's Point for some reason, must have been an important place on the river and not just any barren point he might see. Kelsey named no other place during his two years in the country.

We do not know why Kelsey wanted to remember Deering, but it might indicate that Sir Edward knew the Kelsey family and had been interested in the young lad. A person of Deering's influence could no doubt have secured a commission for a man in whom he was interested but would be able to do little for a lad of fourteen apart from securing him an apprenticeship. Perhaps Sir Edward had sponsored young Henry Kelsey in the Company. The lad would have had no reason to honour an unknown man who had done nothing for him. It does not seem from Kelsey's later story that anyone was interested in securing his advancement in the Company nor that there was anyone to whom he showed special deference. But this could be due to the death of Deering.

For years I had been writing about Kelsey in a small way hoping that someone would make a complete study and tell us the whole story. Finally, an article in the newspaper brought me so many enquiries all asking where information could be procured on Kelsey that, instead of waiting any

longer for someone else to write Kelsey's story I decided to try to do so myself.

I soon realized how great the difficulties were. There are several theories as to the location of Derring's Point, agreeing only in placing it somewhere on the Saskatchewan between Lake Winnipeg and the mouth of the Carrot River. The theories on Kelsey's route were sketchy, and would often lead the investigator to places many miles ahead with out showing from the day to day diary how the discoverer got there. There had been no mapping of the trail to take care of everything. It seemed strange that there was so little agreement on the location of a single point on Kelsey's journey of 800 miles. Everyone agreed that he had discovered the prairie but no one could prove where he had travelled.

Kelsey himself has been blamed for this uncertainty. It has been held that his diary is difficult if not impossible to understand. But the fault may be on our side in judging it to be the record of an explorer rather than of a man whose chief duty was to scout for trade in a new land. Kelsey had no instruments not even a compass, and he was without the definite instructions of those who followed him to report on the geography of the country. The diary lacks little apart from the fact that with his mileage Kelsey did not set down his daily direction of which however we have some clear indications. Kelsey's journal pleased those who sent him. His precise little notes on the country to those who have known it in later years, always seemed to hold the hope that his trail would yet be traced. Some knowledge of the places frequented by the Indians would be valuable.

Unable to make much of the theories of Kelsey's route, and not knowing where they might be right or wrong, I decided to abandon them and stay with Kelsey's diary and the map. Nothing more could be done for Kelsey until we knew where he had travelled. But first his starting place on the Saskatchewan Derring's Point would have to be found. It must be remembered that Kelsey used an Indian local name only once and that he knew no place by its present name, so there was no help in that direction.

It was noted that Kelsey left Derring's point and

ascended the Saskatchewan. Everybody agreed on that. After a day on the river he left it, and for a day and a half he crossed a shallow lake which led him to a portage of half a mile, over which he passed to the river again. It seemed strange that on a progressive journey Kelsey could leave the river and after many miles come to it again. I could at first make nothing of this.

I had the map well in mind and it suddenly struck me that Kelsey must have gone through Saskeram Lake. The Saskatchewan here takes a great bend to the north and across the base lies Saskeram, offering, it appeared on the map, a shorter way and calm water from the river to the river again.

Conclusions based on an agreement of single points could be misleading, but a pattern in the diary that included several features and that could be found on the map would probably be right. If this was Kelsey's route, then by reversing it and going back from the Saskatchewan, over the portage and across Saskeram Lake and then down the Saskatchewan for a day, one ought to be at Deering's Point. This is what I did on the map and found myself at—The Pas.

For the first time the diary and the map were one. Everything agreed. The Pas, an ancient Indian village, would be a place of "resortance" for the Indians fitting Kelsey's description of Deering's Point. Then the Saskatchewan, Saskeram Lake, a portage and the river again. Deering's Point must have been The Pas, and the route Kelsey had taken from there seemed clear.

To all the early travellers on the Saskatchewan, The Pas was an important place and it would have been strange if Kelsey had taken no notice of it. The 1772 diary of Cocking, who like Kelsey belonged to the Company and came from Hudson Bay, shows interesting comparisons with the record kept by Kelsey. Cocking was at The Pas, which he knew as Pasquia. He called it a long frequented place and recorded that many natives had been there lately, which seems to fit in with Kelsey's description of Deering's Point as a place where the Indians resorted. Cocking's course from The Pas was up the Saskatchewan and across a lake to the river again, and on upstream. The pattern in Cocking's

diary is the same as that in Kelsey's earlier record. It looked hopeful, but further investigation would have to be made.

The problem of Kelsey's 600 mile route was like that presented by a jigsaw puzzle. To begin the picture I had a few key pieces in position and I now tried another, the South Saskatchewan as Kelsey's river. It also seemed to fit. Soon I had other pieces placed, and had filled in between them on the map from the diary until I had a picture of Kelsey's trail across the prairies. Everything fitted naturally together, there was no forcing of square corners against round sides. The lines and colours in the changing country merged properly and nothing was left over. Much detail had still to be supplied but the outline was clear and complete.

Kelsey's trail was found to run from The Pas over Saskeram Lake by canoe. On foot it led to Nipawin, and on to the South Saskatchewan. From the vicinity of Clarkboro it turned west to Eagle Hills, on the west slope of which it came to the Battle River, and possibly continued on to the Alberta border.

I was well satisfied, but now I had to find out what others thought. In Toronto I was able to meet Professor Chester Martin who wrote the introduction to the Kelsey Papers, and with him I went over the reasons for placing Deering's Point at The Pas and for the entire route which I believed Kelsey had taken. There was a discussion as we went and we did not hurry over anything. In the end the Professor's comment was that it looked very hopeful. He gave me valuable advice and encouraged me to continue the study.

My visit to Winnipeg coincided with the 80th anniversary of the Manitoba Archives, and by arrangement I was able to meet a number of interested people in the Legislative Library. There was no time for an extended explanation and discussion, but their comments on the route I gave Kelsey were not unfavourable. That was encouraging and as much as could be expected at present.

Believing, as the introduction to the Kelsey Papers suggests, that questions relating to Kelsey's travels would

have to be left in the end to men with long and intimate knowledge of the country, I held my conclusions to be tentative only. If the men on the spot at The Pass could identify it as Deering's Point, we would know where Kelsey's journey to the prairies began, and so be able to get on with the story of his travels.

CHAPTER 7

THE PAS WAS DEERING'S POINT

*"There's a spirit on the river
There's a ghost upon the shore."
Pauline Johnson*

FLYING in from the south I caught sight of the Saskatchewan River, a narrow brown ribbon in the midst of lakes and woods. On its banks for long and from far away I had sought Deering's Point and Henry Kelsey. Glinting in the far distance sat The Pas. For me it held the promise of greater riches than ever lured a pirate of the Spanish Main and it excited me as much.

Kelsey began his journeys to the prairies from Deering's Point somewhere on the Saskatchewan, and I now believed that I knew where it lay. But I had to find evidence on the spot to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that Deering's Point was The Pas. My hopes rose still higher as I crossed the bridge and entered the town.

I spoke first to Mayor F. H. Bickle, emphasizing the importance to The Pas of identifying it as Deering's Point. He was helpful and gave me the names of several men to see. Next morning I met him coming out of the office of the Northern Mail, and he shouted back to the editor that I was the man who thought that they were all sitting on top of the biggest history in the West and did not know it.

Editor R. J. Taylor and his wife gave information about Indian relics in the town. A mass of bones had been found as though they had been flung in after a battle or massacre. The remains of a French Chevalier, identified by a piece of his tunic, had been uncovered and he under one of the main streets. Recently three houses had been built and Indian remains were found in each basement.

One man asked his wife to get me some flints that had been found in the garden but they had been given to the children. The Pas seems to have been built on Indian relics.

and so far as evidence from these goes, it could have been Deering's Point, Kelsey's "place of resortance" for the natives.

Tom Lamb was born at Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan, and Cree is a language he learned with his own. He has travelled the waterways all his life and now flies far and near with Lamha Airways. Tom had never heard of the Kelsey Papers but knew of Kelsey Lake others he thought the explorer had been downstream and somehow had missed The Pass.

We read the diary and took time to understand the pattern there. I asked if the lake Kelsey crossed could have been Saskeram. Tom said that Kelsey's description—shallow, reedy and with islands, looked like Saskeram, and that it could be crossed in several directions. I asked where else the pattern in the diary could be found on the river, and Tom said there were points down stream that could be crossed, but they were short and the whole layout did not fit in elsewhere. He thought The Pass could have been Deering's Point.

Discussing Kelsey's route to the Saskatchewan, it was noted that an old Indian waterway from Hudson Bay used the Minago River and Moose Lake to reach the Saskatchewan River, well above Cedar Lake. This was the route taken by Henday in 1754, and Cocking in 1772, as a map in the Kelsey Papers shows. Like Kelsey they were with Assiniboine Indians and on their way to the plains. Tom thought that this must also have been Kelsey's track, he would have been out of his way on Cedar Lake. Tom knew the way by Minago River and Moose Lake, his parents having lived on the lake for many years.

The route was well known to traders from the Bay, and even after the Hudson's Bay Company built at Cumberland and mainly used another way, it still sent canoes to the Bay by what it called the Spruce (Minago) River Track.

Discussing the reasons for considering Cedar Lake, which is a widening of the Saskatchewan, I said it could not be shown that Kelsey was there, but if this was assumed it indicated nothing regarding the site of Deering's Point.

since we have no idea how far Kelsey paddled upstream after reaching the Saskatchewan. He could have gone up to The Pas.

Tom reasoned that Deering's Point must have been upstream. If it was downstream it was impossible to explain how Kelsey passed and repassed The Pas, which has always been an important Indian village, without halting or seeing an Indian. All the explorers mention The Pas. Everybody agrees that Kelsey must have been on the river there, but have him passing The Pas without even being aware of the place. How this could happen was a bigger problem than some of the problems it was supposed to solve. So ran our discussion. The conclusion was that if The Pas was Deering's Point and Kelsey's starting place, everything was plain. We left it at that.

Mr. J. T. Bodnar is Manager of Keystone Fisheries and President of The Pas Board of Trade. For fifteen years he has been flying over the country and knows the lakes and rivers over a wide area. I was looking for Deering's Point and wondered if he could help me.

Soon we were deep in a discussion of the geography and geology of the district. Going over to a large-scale map, Mr. Bodnar drew his hand down the centre and indicated a long narrow north and south gravel ridge, high and dry but with low land on both sides. The Pas stands where the river crosses the ridge.

Mr. Bodnar spoke of the Saskatchewan, spread out into many channels and lakes to the west, but forced into one narrow bed by the ridge at The Pas. To the east the river spreads out again into endless swamps all the way down to Lake Winnipeg. The ridge is the only thing that ever tamed the river and because of its position there The Pas has always been an outstanding place. Mr. Bodnar could see no other site than The Pas for Deering's Point.

I was later to learn that the views of the men on the spot corresponded to those held by Dr. J. B. Tyrrell, the eminent geologist, geographer, author and traveller in the Canadian North, whose life of active service and interest covers three quarters of a century. In 1890 Dr. Tyrrell

conducted a geological and topographical survey of Cedar Lake and the lower Saskatchewan, a work that he continued in later years. In a letter to me regarding the site of Deering's Point, Dr. Tyrrell stated

"I read Henry Kelsey's account of his travels when it appeared in the Kelsey Papers, and I compared it with my own surveys of the Saskatchewan River and the country to the north of it, and I decided that Deering's Point was most probably The Pas."

Describing in one of his books the higher banks and the narrows in the river at The Pas, Dr. Tyrrell writes:

"This was probably the "neck of land" visited by Henry Kelsey in 1690-1691."

It is significant that Dr. Tyrrell, with his unrivalled knowledge of the lower Saskatchewan River, as soon as he had read Kelsey's record of his travels and without evidently considering an alternative site, should have concluded that The Pas must have been Deering's Point. Hugh Conn, of the Hudson's Bay Company, long resident in the north, came to the same decision after a study of Kelsey's journal. Whatever the theoretical conclusions may have been, the practical men of the north have found Deering's Point at The Pas.

One day the Mayor took me over to Devon Park on the river to see the Historic Sites Monument to Henry Kelsey of which The Pas is very proud. Kelsey is described as the discoverer of the Canadian prairie, the first white man to see the buffalo and the grizzly there, as well as the first to see the muskox in the north. It is not claimed that Kelsey was at The Pas or even on the river near. Nor is the location of Deering's Point given nor the route indicated on which he travelled the plains.

All the inscription states is what has been agreed on so far, which reflects the uncertainty that has surrounded Kelsey and his travels. The monument is at The Pas because

* See *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turner* edited by J. B. Tyrrell, Champlain Society, 1924, note on page 108.

there is no other place on the river where it could be raised, which seems to mean that the only possible site for Deering's Point itself is also at The Pas. Everything and everybody was telling me that I had found Deering's Point.

I had always thought that if The Pas turned out to be Deering's Point it would not be difficult to pick out the actual point. My attention had been drawn to a definite bulge on the south bank where the bridge crosses the river. The Saskatchewan is at its narrowest there and is deep, swift and dangerous, the banks bare and without shelter. It would be no place to land a canoe. So I continued to look for a spot where this could be done—where Kelsey could beach his canoe in safe, calm water, and where, also, there would be some rounding out of the land on the bank, some kind of a point.

From my window in the hotel, over the town, I could see a part of the Saskatchewan at the mouth of the Pasqua or Pas River. It always intrigued me especially after I had made some enquiries about it. I went there and found that the near bank was high—not a striking rise, but outstanding enough where low land comes to the opposite side and reaches west as far as the eye can see. It is more abrupt than other banks near and is high enough to be safe in floods.

The bank at the junction of the rivers rounds out into the Saskatchewan and narrows it for the pass below. One can look right up at the mighty river bearing straight down on the point. It is a striking view, and here, as nowhere else, one gets an impression of the size and power of the river, and of the bank upon which one stands as an outstanding feature of the geography.

At once I knew that I was on the actual point of Deering's Point. Here is not only safe, high ground, but also shelter in the little Pasqua from the strong sweep of the Saskatchewan. One realizes that the quiet pool in the mouth of the small stream must have been the centre of interest in the old Indian village.

A government wharf now stands at the mouth of the Pasqua, and a tugboat was being laid up for the winter. An Indian was fishing at the point. Boats and canoes lined

the bank. A small power boat came up the Saskatchewan, turned into the Pasquia and three Indians stepped ashore. I might have been looking at a bit of ancient history. It recalled the journal of Alexander Henry the Elder who recorded on October 8th, 1775: "At the head of a stream which falls into the Sacatchiwaine, and into which we turned, we found the Pacquayah village."

Here, hunting, trading and war canoes must have come and gone. Here would be welcomes and farewells. Canoes from all the waterways must have made the Pasquia a port of call. A waterfront is an important place in any part of the world, and it would not be less so deep in the heart of the wilderness where the Saskatchewan from the mountains and prairies pours its waters through a single narrow gap.

An account has been preserved of a gathering of Indians each spring near Lake Winnipeg, on the way to trade at the Bay. Old warriors boasted of the scalps they had taken and young bucks of the still greater things they would do. Visiting went on all day and far into the night as they made the round of skin tents and bark shelters. Canoes were made and others were overhauled, and all was made ready for the long trip to tide water.

Then one bright morning scores of canoes would take the water, paddles flashing in the sun, and the journey would begin amid excitement and shouting and the baying of innumerable dogs. Those who were remaining would then settle down to the long wait until the men returned.

The Pas as Deering's Point, a gathering place of Indians from the West on the way to trade, must often have witnessed such a scene. Here they met, renewed friendships, exchanged news, rested, and repaired canoes for the long journey to the Bay.

When all was in readiness, with enough pemmican to see them through most of the return trip, though they sometimes depended on the hunt as they went, the canoes would glide out of the Pasquia into the Saskatchewan. Sweeping through the narrows, where the bridge now stands, the last goodbyes would be shouted and waved as those on the shore

gave up following. The departure for the Bay must have been one of the most colourful events of the whole Indian year

For some distance one can look down the river from The Pas, still in one channel, and later, as the time approached, a constant watch would be kept for the returning canoes. It would be a different story then, some seventy days after the departure, when the weary braves, often ill and starved, straggled back, a few canoes at a time. As soon as they were sighted word would quickly spread, and the whole village, mainly squaws and naked children, would run helter skelter down the banks to meet them. Welcomes would be shouted as they followed the canoes up through the narrows and into the pool above and then into the Pasqua.

Thus is how Kelsey would arrive, paddling with the rest. The canoe would glide into the mouth of the Pasqua and he would step ashore. The excited natives would be crowding around greeting their friends. Kelsey would lift the goods out of the canoe, climb the bank and find himself in the village. As the first paleface most of them had seen he would be an object of curiosity. But he would be friendly and greet the children in their own language and they would soon make up. He was not much older than some of them.

Kelsey's arrival is recorded in his rhyme:

"But making all ye hast I could upon our way
Gott on ye borders of ye Stone Indian country
I took possession on ye tenth Instant July
And for my masters I speaking for ym all
This neck of land I deerings point did call "

Kelsey knew he was on the borders of a new country, all of which the Company claimed under its Charter, though no one had yet been there. Now it had its own commissioned man on the scene to implement the claim by discovery and proclamation. To mark all this Kelsey staged a little ceremony soon after he arrived.

We can imagine Kelsey calling a halt to the activities

of the Indians. Standing bareheaded in their midst he would make some explanation of what he was about to do. Then in a loud voice, when all were attentive, he would claim the country for his masters. He would likely do so in both Cree and Assiniboune, the languages of the tribesmen who were there, and he may have used English as well.

Proclamation of a new ruler was always carried out at the Company's forts, and Kelsey would be present when William and Mary were proclaimed at Fort York the year before. He would know how such a thing should be done, and likely followed the procedure as far as possible when he took possession of the new country.

Probably in claiming the land for his masters Kelsey was thinking of the ruling monarchs amongst them. We can be sure that he would make the ceremony as impressive and memorable as possible for the Indians. Any flag he was carrying would be displayed, probably throughout the proceedings. A gun may have been fired and the high occasion would end in the traditional way with God save Their Majesties.

Meanwhile, the great river was rolling on at their feet, the sun was shining and nothing had changed. It was only a brief event in a day busy with preparations for the rest of the journey. The tribesmen, doubtless, would not understand what was being done and could have no idea how deeply it would ultimately affect the history of their people—how white men would come in ever increasing numbers until the natives were but a remnant in the land of their fathers.

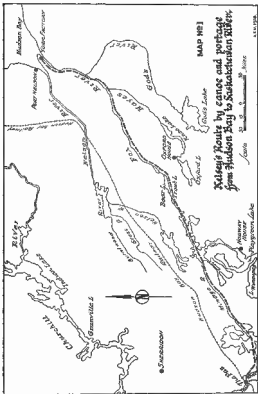
Tomorrow Kelsey's Stone Indians and the families who had waited for them would be on the move. They had only one interest now—the buffalo plains and food. What the paleface boy did had no meaning for them, standing up in their midst and speaking in a loud voice was just another of his strange ways. So they would hurry off in their canoes.

Surely history offers no other example of such an immense territory being discovered and claimed by one who was still a junior, and then being successfully held. By a slow process of evolution, based on the original Charter and

discovery, the West has become a part of Canada, which is linked with the Motherland from which Kelsey came and for which he claimed the land. The connection has been continuous, and changes have come about by natural growth and not as the result of violence or revolution. Looking back we see that our history in the West began at The Pas with an almost unrecognized event—Kelsey claiming all the unknown country that lay beyond.

The importance of the Pasquia's bank may be judged from the fact that, with every other location open, the Company chose it as the site of its trading establishment, the buildings facing both the Saskatchewan and the Pasquia. The warehouse was built on the actual point and just in from where the rivers meet.

The Company still owns some lots and a few houses there, but the actual point is now vacant land and belongs to Mr. J. M. Wanless, an old timer in the North. I asked Mr. Wanless why he had bought it and he said he had done so to hold it for the public good, and to keep it from becoming a yard when its purchase was being mooted for this purpose. I told him that he owned the most historic site in the West and that in preserving it for posterity his foresight and generosity would be recognized some day.



CHAPTER 8

THE CROSS ON THE SASKATCHEWAN

*"Ancient gateway, first to see
A white man with our sod,
Claim thee land, spruce a cross,
And write the name of God"*

ONE day the Mayor called my attention to the end of Devon Park, which he said was high. The remark did not strike me at the time, but early next morning when I woke up it came to my mind. I thought the ground mentioned by the Mayor looked too high to have been made by the river. An examination of the banks showed that they are not of river silt but of the same original clay and boulders as the Pasquia point at hand.

Devon Park, therefore, is not of recent formation. The small channel between it and the mainland must have been made by the river trying to widen the pass in some great flood. The upper end of the park is really part of the Pasquia point, as it appears to be in an aerial picture. In Kelsey's day it would extend farther upstream and may have been a more definite point.

I was fortunate in having as my driver a young Cree, Philip McGillivray, who belonged to the district. Apart from being a companionable guide he had a rich fund of local information. We went along the new Carrot River highway nearly to the Saskatchewan border. Not far out we stopped where the Saskeram River drains the lake into the Carrot River.

Just to the north lay the Saskeram Lakes, a great stretch of brown reeds. Philip had lived on the lakes all one winter trapping muskrats and knew them all. He had seen the area nearly all land and again nearly all water, depending on a run of dry or wet seasons. The size and number of the islands depends on the height of the water. I read Kelsey's description of Saskeram:

"Great ponds of water & so paddling from one to another through long grass web grows in near 2 feet of water this

grass hath an ear like our English Oats today 25 Miles & came to in a small poplo island "

Philip said that was like Saskeram—shallow water, long grass and islands Kelsey would sometimes be padding through reeds and sometimes in open water and would be able to cross the lake to the Saskatchewan.

I wanted to know about poplar islands, on one of which Kelsey had spent the night. Philip recalled that some of the islands had mixed evergreen and poplar trees but most of them had poplars only

I was checking closely on Kelsey, and wondered if the grass he thought like an oat plant could be identified. After he had read Kelsey's notes, Dr R C Russell said it must be Spangle Top or Prickle Fesque, common names for the same plant. To quote Dr. Russell

"There are other grasses that grow in that region but none of them resemble English oats as strikingly as Spangle Top. This grass is a perennial 3 5 feet tall. As it matures the panicle turns whitish and the resemblance to an oat plant is quite strong. It grows in from 6 to 30 inches of water, often in colonies with little else there but Spangle Top."

Evidently Kelsey could not have done better than liken this grass to an oat. Though he was hurried and hungry when he crossed the lake his powers of observation were still acute. He had left the Old Land as a boy of fourteen, and if he came from the city there would be little opportunity to see growing oats. Yet his report is as accurate as it is short. In the plant laboratory in Saskatoon I later saw several specimens of Spangle Top, one a dried mature stalk I would have called it an oat.

There has been a long discussion over the name of The Pas, and what we learn about its origin and meaning throws light on our study. When the town was formed it was said that "Pas" was from the French, and that by using "The" instead of "Le" the place had been given an Anglo French name. Canon Ahenakew has this to say about the name of The Pas:

"The name was O PAS KWA YAW and meant a tree-

covered slope evidently on the river bank. Some Indians called it WA PAS KWA YAW, which means the same. White people always leave out the first syllable so the name became Pasquia. In the same way Kusakchewan, the correct name of the river, became Saskatchewan. Another name for The Pas, which also means the same, was O PAS KWA YAC—Paskoyac."

The French knew the Saskatchewan as the Paskoyac, the name on La Verendrye's maps. Evidently it was the name used by the first Indians they met and differed slightly from the name used by the Indians at The Pas. The post the French built at The Pas was also named Paskoyac. It was evidently the other name Opasquia or Wapasquia, came to designate the Pasquia stream and Pasquia heights, locally known as The Pas River and The Pas Hills. One would naturally think that the town must have become known as The Pas in the same way.

The Canon suggests that the French took one Indian name Paskoyac, and the English the other, Pasquia. It seems to have been the latter name that has survived in the district. The high banks originally tree-covered, and the river in one narrow bed were the features that gave The Pas its name. Literally the name means the Narrows in the Woods. The importance of The Pas may be seen in the fact that it gave its name to other geographical features in a rather wide district and to the Saskatchewan River itself.

Canon Ahensakew goes on to say that while Pasquaw is the word for prairie and it has been suggested that The Pas got its name in this way, he is very sure that the name originated on the spot and in the manner described here.

Kelsey did not use the Indian name for The Pas, but gave it a name of his own which did not survive, Deering's Point. This has been criticised on the ground that neck and point are contradictory terms. But Philip Turnor the father of surveying in the West, not referring to The Pas, spoke of "turning a neck or point of land." No one will accuse him of using terms loosely, and no doubt the descriptions as used and understood by both Turnor and Kelsey were accurate enough.

Kelsey's neck of land may refer to the entire geog-

raphy, the land coming in on both sides to form a neck or bottleneck for the river, which it effectively does, funnelling it into the narrows below. The point could be the rounded bank at the Pasquia, which was probably more of a point in Kelsey's day

When Kelsey arrived at Deering's Point and claimed the country he had no time to set up a marker as a proof of his having been there. It was important, however, that there should be some visible evidence of his claim, and in the fall, after he had completed his first journey to the prairies, he returned to Deering's Point for the purpose of setting up a cross:

"At deerings point after the frost
I set up there a Certain Cross
In token of my being there
Cut out on it ye date of year
And Likewise for to verifie ye same
Added to it my master sir Edward deerings name "

"After the frost" likely refers to the night frosts of October rather than to the heavy cold of winter.

In erecting the cross Kelsey would have in mind those who he knew were bound to follow him on the river, particularly the French, their rivals in the fur trade. A cross at the gateway of the country, where the river was in one channel and where no canoe could slip past in the shadows of a far bank, would announce to all and sundry that he had preceded them on the river, and had left an evidence of his claim to the land.

We can imagine Kelsey selecting two straight trees, cedar or white spruce, and felling, peeling and shaping them with an axe, then laboriously carving an inscription with a knife, taking care to make it deep and legible. The date used was that of his arrival and proclamation in the summer.

The two pieces of wood, of unequal length, would be joined to make a cross. A hole would be dug not far from the edge of the bank. Then, with the help of his Stone Indians who had come with him, and perhaps aided by some

of the Cree villagers, the cross would be hoisted upright. The earth would be firmly tramped around, that it might stand unshaken in all the wild storms that swept down the valley

Kelsey must have stood back to look at the cross, likely pleased with his work and the ease with which he could read the inscription on the arms and upright:

July ye 10th 1890 sir Edward Deering

At the foot of the cross Kelsey may have cut his own name or initials.

The cross would be a striking object. Standing high above the river on a bare point with no tree near, and outlined against the sky, it would be plainly visible even on dull days and after it had become weatherbeaten

One would expect a missionary, rather than a Company agent seeking new trade, to erect a cross; but there was nothing strange in Kelsey's doing this. The French, combining commerce and Christianity more intimately, sanctified the work of both trader and missionary and claimed the lands they found with a cross. Kelsey's cross was not only a marker but also a sign of the sanctity of the claim he made in taking possession of the country. Used in this way crosses are found all over Europe. Proclamations are read at the market cross, the cross testifying to the sanctity and authenticity of what is claimed and proclaimed. Regarded in this light Kelsey's cross, deep in the wilderness at The Pass, was a Christian cross. Beyond what it immediately stands for, a cross speaks of the central fact of the Christian faith

The cross must have become well known to the Indians all over the western plains since it stood at a gathering place of both Crees and Assiniboines. It may have been held in superstitious awe, and strange meanings and powers attributed to those pieces of wood. The cross was big medicine of some kind to the white man or he would never have made the long journey back for the sole purpose of erecting it.

Kelsey would see that the cross was in good condition

and likely to stand for many years when he left the country in May, 1692. It was not only the first object made and erected by a white man between Hudson Bay and the Pacific, but it was also the only thing that remained to tell that a visitor from the outside world had been in the country.

Not until fifty-nine years had passed was another white man to come that way. He was the Chevalier La Vérendrye, and he has been pictured, with amazement on his face, as coming on Kelsey's weather-beaten cross. But time and the elements must have taken their toll by then, for if the cross had still been there it is not likely that the Chevalier would have made the claim that his journey had discovered the Saskatchewan River.

CHAPTER 9

DEPARTURE FROM THE PAS. THE JOURNEY OF 1691

*"Can it be that he would test
Some far region of the west
Tracking some great river course
To its undrained source?"*

I went up to the Pasquia point one morning for a few pebbles to cut and polish in pursuit of my lapidary hobby. Walking about a foot from the water my feet suddenly went out from under me in the mud. When I reached for solid ground my hands slipped out in the same way. With a great heave I pulled myself free. It all happened in a second or two, but I was coated with superfine Saskatchewan silt to the knees and elbows and splashed to the shoulders. It took me a long time, sitting on a rock in a raw wind, to scrape off some of the mud with a piece of wood.

I had brought no change of anything, and time being precious I decided to keep going and dry out as I went. Perhaps Kelsey had had a similar experience getting into his canoe at the same place. The mud may have been an authentic mark of the Kelsey Trail at Deering's Point.

I got the pebbles, digging them out of the bank to make sure that, being buried deeply, they had been there in Kelsey's day. When sliced by a diamond saw, they seemed to be marble of fine grain and had wavy pink bands.

What would The Pas look like in Kelsey's day? It was visited by Samuel Hearne in 1774 and he found the place quite bare and refused to establish a trading post there because there were no trees very close for building, and because the amount of safe, high land was limited. It is likely that The Pas would be much the same in Kelsey's time, eighty years earlier. A few bushes is about all one would expect in an age old Indian village where the tribes constantly came and went. But the evergreen forest has always surrounded The Pas.

Kelsey visited The Pas four times when he arrived in

the country in July, 1690, when he put up a cross that fall; during the summer of 1691, and when he was returning to the Bay in the spring of 1692. But The Pas has no traditions about him. I spoke to some whose parents had been there before them but they had never heard of anything that could be connected with Kelsey. Nor did I hear of any tradition amongst the Indians. Kelsey goes too far back to be reached in that way. Besides, he did not spend so much actual time at The Pas, and he travelled with the Stones and not with the Crees who lived there.

One morning a few old timers with whom I was having breakfast fell to discussing Kelsey's journey from Hudson Bay in a small canoe. We recalled that a canoe is a frail thing and can be made in a few days, and that with reasonable care it will last for years. Kelsey's canoe, carrying guns and goods, would be loaded and unloaded scores of times on the trip, and it was carried over thirty three portages, as he tells us, some of them likely miles long. Yet it was water-worthy when beached after the 600 mile trip, and with a little gumming of the seams, was ready for the journey again.

The view was expressed that the canoe is distinctively Canadian, and that being the means by which the country was discovered, it typifies the adventurous spirit of the explorers. There is something of man himself in the canoe; and it, rather than the buffalo or beaver, ought to be the Canadian emblem.

Sunday broke dull and with a slight rain. Below my window each morning I had seen a bed of pansies, still in bloom in mid October. But the weather seemed to be changing and winter was not far away. I walked up to Christ Church on the river and sat by an east window in a pew that had been made by Sir James Richardson's men, over a hundred years ago. The Pas has always been a Cree village, and as the service proceeded it rather startled me to realize that the ancestors of some of those in the choir and pews must have been present when Kelsey arrived. They would hear him when he stood up and claimed the land on that bright July day long ago, and would see him when he returned from the prairie. The cross he set up on the point at hand would be a common sight to them. There was a

living connection with the past in the congregation at worship in the old church on Deering's Point.

Tom Lamb had borrowed Kelsey's diary and when I arrived one evening he was reading it to the family:

"We had nothing to eat but one wood partridge." "We came to where one Beast lay to Suffice our Hungry Bellies."

Tom shook his head and remarked that Kelsey must have been hungry all the time, and yet there was never a word of complaint out of him. What a wonderful lad he had been!

On Sunday evening, my last in The Pas, I went up to the Pasqua point and read the introduction with which Kelsey began his diary for the second journey. Using materials which he had just received from Governor Geyer for the purpose, Kelsey wrote:

"A Journal of a voyage & Journey undertaken by Henry Kelsey through Gods assistance to discover & bring to a Commerce the Naywatame people in Anno 1691."

Kelsey had likely penned these words where I now stood, just before he began his journey to the prairies. Here, for the first time in all the Canadian West, the name of the Christian God was written down and His help sought and acknowledged.

Part of the first entry could have been written at the same time:

"July ye 15th Now having Received those things in full wch ye Governour sent me taketh my depart from Deerings Point to seek for ye Stone Indians wch were gone ten days before we having but very little victuals."

On the spot it was not difficult to reconstruct the scene somewhat after the fashion in which it had taken place. Kelsey would be seated writing in the diary. Then putting it safely away in an inside pocket, he would rise and join the Indians, who were hurrying to get away now that the

goods had arrived from the Governor. They would go down the bank to the waiting canoes, ready and loaded. Soon the party would embark, paddles would flash, and the light birch craft would follow each other out of the Pasqua into the broad Saskatchewan.

An early night was closing down on my reverie and I thought I saw the canoes vanish upstream in the gathering mist. Henry Kelsey had taken his "depart from Deering's Point." I vowed that I would follow his trail across the prairies and make him known through a Crusade for Kelsey.

My mission at The Pas was over for the present. The ancient site had welcomed me, and as I asked questions and searched, it had given me its complete confidence. Out of the long ago it had whispered the well kept secret. It was indeed the white boy's Deering's Point.

It was after midnight when I took the train, and the moon was riding in high white clouds. When I awoke it was raining and the unharvested fields looked sodden and desolate. Snow was falling along the river I had left.

South of Canora I was nearing my first mission field. Where the Little Whitesand crosses the road, I saw the white brick house where I first reported for duty on the prairies. The railway, built long after my day, crossed the creek near my first home in the West, a square log building that had not changed any. Away to the east I could see the high land on the school section, over which I had ridden the day the Province was inaugurated, wondering who had discovered the country and where he had travelled. Now, after all these years, I had come back with the answers. It was all part of the Kelsey story to me.

In Regina I met Dr. Lewis H. Thomas, Provincial Archivist, and Mr. John H. Archer, Legislative Librarian, and went over the results of my Kelsey research in the fullest explanation I had yet made. There were questions and a discussion as we went along. These men both know the northern prairies, which made it easier to identify the various places on Kelsey's trail. I was given every assistance and encouraged to continue my work on Kelsey.

Regina was then entertaining Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh Kelsey had claimed the country for the same royal line, and it seemed more than a coincidence that I had come right down from the trail knowing for the first time where this historic event had taken place. As the Royal Couple passed along I gave them an extra cheer for Henry Kelsey.

CHAPTER 10

HUNGRY DAYS AND HEAVY GOING

*"Very full of dreams that desert, but my two legs took me through it,
And I went to watch the morning with the sun, all black and red."*
—Kipling

THE goods Kelsey had ordered from the Fort, and for which he waited at Deering's Point, came by different canoes and he could not get away until the last of them had arrived. He had asked for a calumet, a peace pipe, and it proved to be as important as anything he possessed. Often on the trail when the war spirit was running high, it was to be produced and solemnly puffed by the braves while Kelsey warned them, that if they went to war there would be no more trading of pelts for the prized guns, kettles and tobacco, though they earned them all the way to the Bay. Passing "ye Governours pipe" was like smoking with the Governor himself, and it never failed to dampen their ardor for the warpath and scalps.

As we have seen, the first day Kelsey and his party went up the Saskatchewan, and next morning tracked their canoes through a narrow waterway into Saskeram lakes and swamps. In wet seasons a canoe could be paddled a long way west and up the Saskeram or Birch River before portaging over to the Saskatchewan. Kelsey's mileage indicates that this is what he did.

That this was a regular route is shown by the fact that Kelsey came to a "Carriage" or portage, a path worn by the Indians. Some maps today show a short portage to the Saskatchewan from one of the lakes drained by the Saskeram River, to the southeast of Cumberland. It would be about there that Kelsey regained the Saskatchewan.

The party had been short of food when they left Deering's Point and were not successful in procuring any game on the way over Saskeram. They were all in a starving condition when the Saskatchewan was reached, and it was decided to take to the woods where there would be a better chance of game. As it was, they had "no Sustenance whereby

to follow our Chase " Having left the lake and gone eight miles up the Saskatchewan, Kelsey records the end of the canoe journey, seventy one miles from Deering's Point "

"July ye 18th Today paddled up ye River until about noon & then came to a small arm of ye River so we concluded to sett our netts & lay up our Cannoes & Rest ye Remaining part of the day there wch accordingly we did so I took ye Rundlett wch ye Governor had sent me full of powder & emptyed part of it into a leather Bagg so I put one hatchet 2 fathom of Black Tobarco & Knives 2 Skains of twine two nettlines one tin shov & other small moveables into ye rundlett & headed it up again so we made a hole in the ground & put that & other things into it & put into it so made of it our storehouse until we came yt way ye next spring dist 8 miles 3 pikes today "

The Rundlett was a small wooden barrel filled with powder, which Kelsey had just received from the Governor, and he partly emptied it to make room for something else. It would have been impossible to carry an unwieldily heavy keg on the trail with all the other things, particularly in their weakened condition, so Kelsey made a cache of part of the goods. Having carefully packed them in the barrel he closed the wooden end making it watertight once more, and buried it in the ground.

Kelsey tells us he intended to return that way and reclaim the goods in the spring. No doubt he did this, and so we cannot hope to find the cache and prove his route in this manner. But we can tell approximately the location of the little inlet on the river where the canoes were laid up and the cache buried. I did not visit this part of the trail, but if ever the inlet is identified it will be in an original deposit of some kind and not in river silt, about which we can tell nothing.

It is likely that by such signs as the Indians leave, Kelsey knew that the band ahead of him was also short of food and intended taking to the land. It is probable that they all left their canoes at the same place, the most suitable location after they regained the Saskatchewan.

Until long after Kelsey's day the Saskatchewan passed

to the south of Cumberland Lake, but now the main stream enters the lake and regains its old channel south of Cumberland House. This is in Saskatchewan Province and not far west of the Manitoba border. Owing to the swampy nature of the country, it would hardly have been possible for him to take to foot travel to the east of where we believe he left the canoes. At best, the ground would have been passable only on the high levee bank not far from the river.

Evidently, before hunger forced him into the woods, Kelsey intended going up the Saskatchewan for a long way, and there is no reason to think that he altered his direction when he changed his mode of travelling.

Meanwhile the nets had been set but caught only three pike, not many for a hungry company. After a night's rest they began the journey on foot.

"July ye 19th This morning we set forward into the woods & having traveled about 10 Miles pitcht a place for the tent & went out a hunting all Returning in the Evening having kill'd nothing but 2 wood partridges & one Squirrell."

The hope of getting food was not realized on the first day in the woods, nor was there any improvement on the second day as the record shows.

"July ye 20th So setting forward again we had not gone above 9 Miles but came on ye track of Indians wch we Judged had past four Days before so we went on till we came up with their old tents so we seeing they had kill two Beast I though they might have had a good store of victuals & not have been farr before us I sent an Indian before & fitted him out wth my pipe & some tobacco & bid him tell them to send me some relief & likewise for to stay for me this day we travelled about 18 Miles."

The Indians whose camping place they found were of Kelsey's own company and amongst those who had left Deering's Point ahead of him. Kelsey's party were now in great need of food, and hoped to reach those ahead and to find that they had been successful in the chase.

"July ye 21st This morning setting forward again

about 11 a Clock I met yt same Indian wch I had sent away yesterday he telling me he had seen no Indians so I caused another hand to go away Immediately because I was so heavily Loaded myself yt I could not go ."

This is an interesting sidelight on the manner in which Kelsey travelled, so heavily burdened with goods and gifts for the chiefs that he could make no time on the trail. He must have been a mass of parcels, bulging from his back and sides, as he trodged through bushes and long grass and over rough ground. A slightly built lad, he was urged to superhuman efforts by the starving condition of himself and the Indians, yet he made many miles each day. Carrying his own load, Kelsey had evidently not adopted the method generally used by white men later, the one the Indians used, of having the women carry all the burdens.

On July 22nd it rained hard but hunger forced him to go on. They were in dire straits now, with some on the verge of collapse from lack of food. The Indians ahead would have to be found and forced to leave his burdens with the women, Kelsey pushed ahead with two Indians in the hope of finding food for the starving band. It must have been an uncomfortable day in soaking clothes, with bushes and long grass showering them as they passed. On empty stomachs and with no relief in sight, they covered twenty five miles that day.

At noon next day one of Kelsey's Indians, probably a family man, fearing that the women behind might die, got Kelsey's permission to return to them, and was given an order authorizing him to draw some powder from the women who had taken over the stores. Absent or present, Kelsey controlled the supplies from the Bay.

Short of food and hungry when they left Deering's Point, during the next two weeks they covered 200 miles and procured only three fish, two partridges, one squirrel, three pigeons, two swans, a moose and some berries. Those ahead fared no better and were reduced to eating grass. Meat is only one item in our diet but it was all they had, and ample supplies had to be forthcoming all the time.

Small wonder that fears were expressed for the survival of the women.

Just south of where Kelsey then was, and sixty-three years later, Henday, Kelsey's immediate successor from the Bay, reported that his Indians were reduced to a daily ration each of one quarter of a gull, eagle or duck. He wrote that no bird or beast had been seen in a day's travel. Nevertheless it is a surprise to find men starving at the height of summer in a country that has been regarded as a paradise for waterfowl! One would think that Kelsey and his band might have lived well on ducks alone there. Yet ducks are not mentioned anywhere in Kelsey's prairie journal, though he must have seen them constantly

When the Indian went back to the women at noon, Kelsey was left to go on with a slave lad. Part of the entry for July 23rd reads:

" . . . I proceeded forward along with a little slave Boy & toward night we came to good footing for all yt we had passed before was heavy mossy going so in the Evening wee came too dist 30 Mile & nothing to eat but one wood patridge."

It was to be some days yet before they all came together and had enough food, but in the knowledge that they escaped death by starvation, we may turn to consider this important entry telling of Kelsey's arrival in a different kind of country with good footing. It looked like nothing less than his discovery of a new kind of country, and I felt that this point in his journey would have to be completely investigated.

After 100 miles of heavy going Kelsey came, suddenly, to solid ground. Counting his miles from where he had abandoned his canoe, and the miles he still had to cover to reach the South Saskatchewan, which I thought must be Kelsey's river, I concluded that there must have been a line near Nipawin and Carrot River town where originally the land changed from soft to hard footing. It had been open country and much of it was impossible for farming until it was drained. There must be somebody, I felt certain, who

could tell where the two kinds of country met not so long ago.

I made many enquiries and finally received a soil report and map illustrating soil history and conditions there. These show that over a large area, designated half bog, marsh deposits had covered the country around Carrot River town and to the north to a depth of two or three feet. Much of it had been drained and was now cultivated.

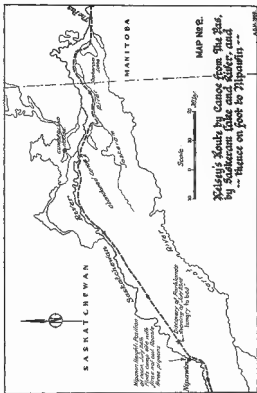
A magazine article² describes a belt lying between the Precambrian Shield and the poplar parklands. It is called the Pioneer Fringe because it is capable of being cultivated when the evergreen trees have been cut and the low lands drained, a reclamation process that has been going on for some time. An accompanying map shows the Fringe as originally meeting the parklands near Nipawin before cultivation began. This is also where the soil map shows the country as changing.

According to the map Kelsey would travel on the soft surface of the Fringe all the way up country, about 100 miles, from where he abandoned his canoe, and would reach firm footing near Nipawin. The Soil Report also indicated the same thing.

It is also here in the vicinity of Nipawin, in an irregular line and with very little rise, that the first prairie level gives way to the second level—the higher plain on which most of Saskatchewan lies, with cities such as Regina and Saskatoon. Altogether the neighbourhood seemed a likely place to look for something important on the Kelsey Trail. I could draw no definite conclusions in the meantime, and from a distance. The next step must be to see the country itself, and to consult with the practical men there. I resolved that the summer would see me in Nipawin.

¹ Saskatchewan Soil Report No. 12 and Soil Map No. 11, Soil Survey Office, Saskatoon. Dr. J. Mitchell, Director.

² Article on the Pioneer Fringe, Symington, in *Canadian Geographic Journal*, April 1923, page 129.



CHAPTER 11

DISCOVERY OF THE PARKLANDS AT NIPAWIN

*"It's God's present to our Nation,
Anybody might have found it but—Win Whimper came to me!"*
—Kipling

I knew no one at Nipawin, but at breakfast the first morning several men sat behind me whom I judged by their conversation to be good prospects for information about the district. At once I introduced myself to them of my mission, and was given a hearty welcome. They were early settlers, and one of them was Dr J. A. Kelsey, pioneer medical man, who had recently read my *Crusade for Kelsey*. So the ice was well broken, and soon we were all scanning the maps and discussing Kelsey's route.

I particularly wanted to know where Kelsey would come to good footing after 100 miles of heavy going, and they all agreed that he would find no firm ground until he got down to Nipawin. The country had changed since they first knew it, but that was how things had been not so long ago. That was valuable information right away, and confirmed what I had come to believe.

They said that I would have to meet Bill Bushfield, who knew all about the country before it was settled, as the result of ten year's service with a survey party working east from Nipawin. Bill had never heard about Kelsey, but as he was interested in the past, affable and communicative, the information I sought simply oozed out of him as he spoke.

I had seen The Pas Trail marked on a map and thought that it had likely been followed by Kelsey, but Bill said that it was on high ground by the river and was not an old trail. It had been laid out in 1908, and he himself had worked on it. The trail had been used by a lumbering company.

Bill then told of an old Indian route known as the Cumberland Trail. It came up the country from the north-east just south of The Pas Trail and went straight to avoid

the bends on the river. But it was on low land with swamp and peat.

He declared that this would be the route Kelsey took, and that east of us he would not have a single foot of solid ground beneath him. Bill had been over it all in its natural state and knew that Kelsey would have tough slogging all the way to Nipawin. 'Heavy mussy going' Kelsey had called it, and Bill said it was just that. It was mostly open country, and impossible for farming until the land was drained.

We discussed Kelsey's estimated distance from The Pas to Nipawin, 170 miles, 100 of them on foot after he left his canoe. Bill quoted a survey to show that the distance by the winding river was 213 miles and he thought that Kelsey's mileage offered no problem. The course he had taken would cut off many river miles. He claimed that the miles Kelsey had travelled on foot showed that he came up to Nipawin in a fairly straight line, which meant that he was on the soft lower ground. Had he followed the high bank by the river he would have had better footing, but his distance would have been greater.

Bill had something to say about the Sipanok Channel in the low country to the east, which Kelsey must have crossed but of which he makes no mention. The Channel is a stream that runs down from the Saskatchewan to the Carrot River. Some very large black poplars grow at the Saskatchewan end, and Bill had seen some of them fallen and forming a bridge over the Sipanok. He thought that Kelsey might have crossed on the trunk of a tree about where the Cumberland Trail lay.

Bill then made a startling statement. He could show me the place where the old Cumberland Trail came off soft ground and where Kelsey would find good footing for the first time. I had not believed that we could be exact about this, and had not been looking for more than an approximate location where the country changed. I had an open mind, but I would have to check up on anything as definite as Bill was suggesting.

"Bill Bushfield," I said, "we have a good story now, but if we claim too much we'll spoil it."

Bill took his time to that and finally drawled, "Well, I knew the old trail and that was where it came to firm ground. Why would Kelsey be off the trail?"

The logic of this was clear, and the diary shows that Kelsey's several bands had followed one another all the way up, and would wait for and catch up on each other. Kelsey was certainly on a trail, and there was nothing to suggest that he had left it at any time.

Bill had not seen the coloured soil map but he had the trail coming to firm footing where the map shows the country originally changed. All the old timers to whom I spoke agreed that the different types of land met there, and would accept Bill's location of the old trail and the exact place where he said it came to higher ground.

Bill was quite definite. He knew the place before the land was broken and when the trail could easily be traced. He made sure that I had the map location—between Townships 50 and 51, west of the 2nd Meridian and just five miles east of Nipawin.

Later, Bill took me out to where the old trail came up the country. Skirting a long narrow swamp it reached higher ground where we stood. The two roads meet there now and one angles across the swamp. There is a rise of land just to the west. It would be there that Kelsey came to firm sod. The prairie around is fairly level with wheat fields and an odd poplar bluff. Only a few homes are to be seen.

It was here that the parkland prairies of the Canadian West were discovered. Of varying width, the parklands lie across the country for hundreds of miles, between the clay lands of the evergreen forest and the open plains of the south. Characterized by poplar trees and open spaces, the parklands are green and pleasant to behold. Comprising a large part of the prairies, they contain some of the richest farm lands and most thriving towns in the west.

It was toward evening when Henry Kelsey reached the parklands, glad of firm footing at last. This was on July 23rd, 1691, a notable date in our history. It would be some

days later and at the beginning of August by our present calendar. His sole companion was a little slave boy, likely captured by the Stones in some raid on the Blackfoot tribe.

That day they had travelled thirty miles with nothing to eat but one partridge. When they came to firm ground they camped for the night. There was nothing to cook but they would light a fire to keep the mosquitoes away. The two lads would spend an uneasy night, with the pangs of hunger disturbing the rest of their wearied bodies. If Kelsey dreamed of standing over a fallen moose, he woke to a hungry morning with nothing to break the long fast. Such is the record of the first night spent by a white man in the poplar bluff country of the Canadian West.

On his journey of the previous year Kelsey must have come to the same kind of country but it would not be at the same place, the strong indication being that he went up the Saskatchewan by canoe there. We are without any record or date, and as it stands, the historical discovery of the parkland prairies took place not far from Nipawin, at the time and in the manner described.

Bill mentioned that Nipawin was not always on the present site. Originally it stood three and one half miles south of the town and about one mile east. This puts it right on the old Cumberland Trail angling southwest there. The old town was evidently built about where the trail came to better or poorer going according to the direction of travel. The manner of travelling probably had to be changed there. In its later history, taking carts farther east of there would be difficult at certain seasons, and it would be a place where Indians and freighters were likely to rest. When the town was moved it took the name with it.

Old Nipawin was built near where Kelsey made his great discovery and spent the night. In the morning, he records, he shot three pigeons and carried them along.

One evening Bill took several of us sixteen miles east of Nipawin to see a two-mile stretch of the high bank on the Saskatchewan that had suddenly come down with a roar early in the morning. The trip gave me another chance

to see the country. Far down the valley through Ravendale and Arborfield there are now farms where Kelsey had found "heavy mossy going."

Several times we crossed the line of the old trail that Kelsey had followed, but there is no trace of the trail itself today. Sometimes Bill would indicate a fine stand of wheat and remark that it had been a tough tramp surveying the land, and that he had never expected to see crops there

CHAPTER 12

MORE LIGHT AT NIPAWIN

*"Through every rift of discovery some shining anomaly drops out of darkness,
and falls like a golden link into the great chain of order"*

—E. H. Chapin

A highlight at Nipawin was a visit to Bill Bushfield's farm a few miles upstream from the town. In one of his fields on the river flat are the sites of the trading posts of Finlay and François. They were located by the late Prof. A. S. Morton, with whom Bill is proud to have worked.

There is a ridge high above the river from which one can look up and down stream and across the country. Bill said the ridge had not changed any since he homesteaded the land, and that some scooped out holes, which he thought had been made by the Indians, were also the same. The more I thought about the ridge and its position in the country the more I became convinced that it must have been visited by Kelsey. In a day or two things had become clearer and I was back there.

From the knob in which the ridge ends, I had a good look at the Saskatchewan below and the country around. Then, spreading out a map, I called Bill over.

"Bill," I said, "coming from the northeast, Kelsey would reach the place where you say he found dry ground and then come right on to the ridge here. It is all on a straight line."

"Certainly," replied Bill, and pointing to the fields he indicated the line of the old trail by the edge of a slight depression on his land, and brought it right to the ridge.

"The trail came right there," he said, pointing to lower ground a few yards away.

"Kelsey would be here," I said.

"He certainly would be," was the reply.

I then read aloud the report for the day: "July ye 24th Today we had very good going . . ."

"Yea," commented Bill, "that would be the country between where he came to firm ground and spent the night, and my place here—good going."

I read on: "About noon we came up with their tents they having increased from 2 to 7 . . ."

I asked if Kelsey could have reached this place by noon, and Bill said it was no more than seven miles from where he had spent the night, and that he could easily have made the ridge by midday.

When Kelsey came up he saw from the evidence of the campsite that the two tents that had been travelling immediately ahead of him had been increased to seven. Evidently five tents in the lead had been waiting for the two tents.

In this connection there is an illuminating note from Canon Ahenakew.

"Nipawin (Nipawewin) is a cone-like hill on the river. Archdeacon Mackay told me the Indians used to stand there and watch for boats and people. The name means, 'the place where one stands'."

It is not the ridge itself that was Nipawin but the crest in which it ends high above the river. From it the town and district and the rapids in the river below took their name. At a south bend of the river, where land and water routes came together, the high knob gave a fine view of travellers coming by either way.

This explains what happened here as related in Kelsey's diary, when five tents had waited for two tents, and having spent the night together, had gone on a few hours before he arrived. The story, the distances, the habit the Indians had of waiting for one another there—and these and other evidence go far to show, and perhaps conclusively prove, that Kelsey's position on the trail at noon on July

24th was the height over the river which the Indians called Nipawin.

The diary for July 24th continues ". . . their fire not being quite out we sat down & roasted 3 Pigeons wch I had kil'd yt morning . . ."

Bill and I picked out the place where we thought they would find the dying fire, the spot where we ourselves would have made a fire. They would soon revive the glowing embers with fresh fuel, and having roasted and eaten three pigeons, the first food of the day, the English lad and the Indian boy would hurry off on the trail of their friends in the hope of finding ample supplies and a good meal.

As we stood, a meadowlark, sweetest singer of the West, rose from the grass and his cheery song floated up to us. Perhaps a lark had also sung for Kelsey though he may not have heard it. Hungry and weary men with an uncertain future have other things on their minds.

That afternoon Kelsey and his companion kept on the trail west and at 6 o'clock came up to their friends. They had been camped since noon with the men out hunting but had not been successful, and Kelsey records that they had "Nothing but grass and Berryes to eat part of wch they gave to me . . ."

Dr. Russell thinks that Kelsey may have used the word grass as applied to various herbs, or, he may have meant that they actually ate grass. He points out that Indians have always eaten a variety of plants and roots which could be included in the old Biblical term, grass. The berries would probably be saskatoons, though blueberries and cranberries are also found along the Saskatchewan. Patches of raspberries could be found almost anywhere.

In the middle of the night some men returned, having killed a moose. The successful hunter sent his son to invite Kelsey to come and smoke a pipe with him. He had to be wakened from his sleep, but immediately went and was presented with "The great gut of ye Beast aforesaid." The great gut was a delicacy and Kelsey received it as a special

favour. When he had eaten it—probably just as it was—he returned to his rest.

Next morning Kelsey suggested that they wait for those who were behind, but an old man said it would be useless since they had nothing left to offer them. He seems to have been right. So they all moved on, with no success attending the hunters, and after ten miles made camp.

They did not travel on the following day, July 26th, and Kelsey sent the men out hunting. Late that day the women came up. One wonders how these poor creatures, patient, uncomplaining and famishing these many days, had kept going with their burdens and had overtaken the others.

That night the hunters returned and reported having killed five beasts, which lay where they had fallen. Next day Kelsey wrote:

"Now we pitch again & about 10 o'Clock came to where one Beast lay to suffice our Hungry Bellies . . ."

It would be a happy event on the long trail with the satisfaction of having enough to eat for the time being.

They were now thirty miles west of Nipawin, and had been in or near such districts as Lost River and Teddington. It is still a country without railways or main roads, like the country east of Nipawin, and though it is settled, few houses are to be seen there today. Kelsey's trail had been a few miles south of the Saskatchewan and now he was in the vicinity of Fort à la Corne. We will leave him there for the present.

A few weeks later, in the Archives of the University of Saskatchewan, I went over with Dr. Lewis Thomas the evidence I had gathered for the Kelsey Trail around Nipawin. An old map of the district was produced and there, out of the long ago, was the Cumberland Trail coming up the country from the northeast. We remarked that it was surprising how everything came together and fitted in—the coloured soil map showing where the country changed, the place where Bill said the trail came to firm sod, the

distances, the camping places and the story in the diary. There seemed no room for doubt. Time had finally brought Kelsey and us together at the same spot, and the reasons for this seemed to be as solid as the ground itself.

Later, in Regina, Mr. A. Bereskin of the Surveys Branch of the Natural Resources Department showed me some aerial pictures of Nipawin Ridge. He said there was a distinct knob on the edge of a steep bank, something I could confirm. Noticing a line on the picture I asked about it, and was told that it would be an old Indian trail. The trail was shown as coming close to the lower end of the height and passing on to the west.

Wonders never cease. I had been over the country and had been shown where the trail lay. I had seen it in the same place on an old map. Now, I was looking at an aerial photograph of the same trail, brought up out of the subsoil long after it had vanished on the surface. Along that trail Kelsey had tramped, and camped, and tramped again. For further proof it would have been necessary to produce Henry Kelsey himself.

CHAPTER 13

THE TRAIL AT FORT A LA CORNE

"Grows the great deed though none
Shall behold it done."

—Charles G. D. Roberts

AFTER a long absence I went back to Fort à la Corne. The Kelsey Trail is there, and I wanted to meet Canon Edward Ahenakew who has been connected with the mission for many years.

Driving through the Reservation on a lovely summer day with the smoke of heavy prairie fires to the left and right, I met a wagon with several men in it. The Canon was with them. As they were on the way to fight the fires I did not want to detain them, but the Canon said he would answer a question.

I wanted to know what route Kelsey would follow after he left the river. The Canon wanted to know why he would leave it—the natural highway. I explained that the band was starving. In that case, the Canon said, Kelsey would come up the south side, the north being impossible. He would not be far from the river and at times would reach it. This was exactly the Kelsey Trail I had been following.

When next I met the Canon he was with Chief Abel McLeod of the Reserve. There was no hurry, and on a table we had a map and Kelsey's diary. I wanted to find out about the old Cumberland Trail. The Chief knew the Trail where he lived and it used to be plainly visible, though traces of it had almost completely vanished. On a map he pointed out where it ran between Nipawin and Fort à la Corne, and then he drew it in with a pencil. Later, I found an old map showing the Trail lying where the Chief had it placed.

I then read the diary where Kelsey tells of something that took place not far from the Fort, when some Indians welcomed him because the Nayhaythaways were going to murder them—one of the many allusions to the fear in

which the tribes held each other. The Canon laughed out loud:

"Nayhaythaways," he cried, and nudging the Chief said, "That's us, Cree. We were going to do them in."

The Chief was laughing too. He had heard that story before

The Canon asked what Kelsey was doing in the country and I explained that he was trying to make peace between their people and the Blackfeet.

"Impossible!" cried the Canon, bringing the flat of his hand down on the table. "Impossible! Impossible!"

For confirmation he turned to the Chief, who was shaking his head and saying "No, no! No peace!"

The Canon said his great grandfather had been an Assinibone, who were allies of the Cree, and that from two tribes he had inherited a grudge against the Blackfeet.

"And yet when I looked down on them in church I felt no enmity against them. But it took the grace of God," he added with a shake of his head.

They were both interested in Kelsey's diary, which they had not seen before, and had many questions to ask about it. The Canon read aloud the record for July 26-29, when Kelsey was close to the present Fort and was visited by some strangers who invited him to meet their band some distance ahead.

Other parts of the diary were read telling of hunger along the trail. "A tough time," was the comment; "but that was often the way"

I now had a clearer picture of Kelsey's course and story west of Nipawin. The diary shows thirty-seven miles from the first firm ground to the camp of July 27th. The route

and distance both reasonably indicate that Kelsey would be near the Fort when he made camp that day.

"July ye 27th Now we pitcht again & about 10 o Clock came to where one Beast lay to suffice our Hungry Bellies & about 2 o Clock in ye afternoon there came five Indian strangers to our tents . . "

"July ye 28th This instant ye Indians having . . desired of us for to meet ym at a place called Waskashreesebee so I told ym yt we would make as much hast as we could conveniently so in ye Evening the strangers returned to their tents we lying still this day . . "

Kelsey had made camp at ten in the morning. News had evidently gone out that he was there, and at two in the afternoon five Indians paid him a visit. They were Stones, and were the first men met on the trail who were not of his own bands. It may be possible to make a story of this.

The Peonan Creek (unfortunately the Indian and local spelling, Pahonan, has been changed on the map) enters the Saskatchewan just west of the Fort. I recall hearing when I preached on its banks that the mouth of the creek was a place where the Indians used to wait for each other and that the name signified this. Canon Ahenakew confirms the meaning of the name PAHONAN, as being a place where people wait for something or someone. The real Pahonan, he states, was at Carlton, while the name at Fort à la Corne is properly, PA HO NA NIS, the smaller or less important waiting place.

Being at a south bend of the river where land and water travel met, the mouth of the Pahonan would be a natural gathering spot. No matter how men travelled they would come together there.

Cocking came all the way up the river by canoe and found eighteen tents of Indians, Crees and Assiniboues, waiting there for the men who had been at the Bay. It is likely that Kelsey on his first journey also came to Pahonan by canoe, and that he was expected there on this second trip.

This all has a bearing on Kelsey's location when he was visited by the strange Indians. Evidently they had been awaiting his arrival at the gathering place, Pahonan, when they learned that he was not coming by canoe, but was camped on the trail not far away.

They learned this right away, for Kelsey halted at ten in the morning and at two in the afternoon they visited him. Kelsey records that having stayed overnight and delivered their message, they returned to their tents in the evening.

The fact that the strangers did not leave until evening is another indication that their camp was not far away. The tents were still pitched, and likely some of the band had remained when the others hurriedly left the previous day. The conclusion is that the strangers were camped at Pahonan and that Kelsey was on the trail a few miles to the east, having halted short of the gathering place where the hunters had killed a beast.

It was at the main places on Kelsey's route—The Pas, Nipawin and Fort à la Corne—that the next white men in the country established the first trading posts. It was on a flat at the mouth of the Pahonan, not far from the Fort, that the French planted the first garden in the West, the historic beginning of agriculture in the country. When everything is considered it is no surprise to find that Kelsey's route was by the Saskatchewan, the natural highway to the West.

Indian names are descriptive, and the difference between Nipawin and Pahonan seems to be that the former means a place where one could stand and look while waiting, while the latter name indicates only a waiting place. It is a difference that can be confirmed on the spot, for while there is a far view at Nipawin, there is no place at Pahonan where one can see much of the country. But the name Nipawin was also applied to the Fort, as such early travellers as Palliser note.

Kelsey's Indians had been following each other in various bands all the way from Deering's Point and were now together for the first time. A band composed of two tents and another of five tents had united at Nipawin. Behind came Kelsey and one Indian, and in the rear was a party

that included several women. Together now, they seem to have numbered some eight tents or about fifty souls. The size of the band changed from time to time, but generally got larger as it went on.

They had now been camped for two days and the hunters had been successful, so that Kelsey reported for the first time that they had "no want of victuals." Breaking camp on the 29th they would shortly pass the site of the Fort, and a little to the west, Pahonan, and make twelve miles that day.

Going west next day they made ten miles, likely still following a trail. During the two days they would be in or near the present Queen Maud and Glen Mary districts. On the third day they came to a company of Stone Indians who knew Kelsey and gave him a warm welcome. The significance of this meeting will be discussed later. It likely took place in the Coxby district. In the morning it rained heavily, but the sky clearing about noon, they proceeded on the journey. In fifteen miles or so they arrived at Waskashsee-sabee, the river where Kelsey had trusted to meet the strangers, but he found that they had gone on upstream.

Kelsey's trail had been about ten miles south of the Forks of the Saskatchewan, and in the interests of the story I made a trip up there. When last I had seen the place it was in the wilds and visited by few people. Once again I stood on the high east bank. The wilderness had vanished, and from the edge of a wheat field I looked down on herds of grazing cattle and acres of grain. Settlement had gone far north with roads and railways, and no longer did one have the feeling that there was nothing between one and the North Pole.

The Chevalier de la Vérendrye reached the Forks in the spring of 1749, in a journey which he claimed had discovered the Saskatchewan (Paskoyac) River. He found it a place where numerous Crees gathered at that time of year to discuss whether they would take their furs to the French or to the English. From them he learned that the river had its source in lofty mountains, beyond which there was a

great lake whose waters were undrinkable Véreudrye did not proceed farther west.

We do not know that Kelsey was at the Forks but his two journeys out and in must have taken him past the Forks four times. We know that he was walking once, but do not know how he travelled on the other three trips. It is probable that, like Henday and Cocking later, he walked west and returned by canoe, in which case he would be at the Forks. If his winter quarters were not far away, as there is some reason for thinking, he may have been there a number of times.

It is easier to think that Kelsey must have visited the Forks of the Saskatchewan than to imagine him as wandering through the country with canoe travelling Indians, not far from, and yet somehow missing, the most important geographical focal point in the entire west—the gathering place of all the waters. We must remember that Kelsey's diary, covering only a few months of the two years he spent in the country, leaves much time to be accounted for.

So the probability is that Henry Kelsey was the first white man to see the lonely place, deep in the heart of the continent, where the two great prairie streams, the North and the South Saskatchewan finally mingle their waters and become one.

CHAPTER 14

THE SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN—RIVER OF DISCOVERY

*A promise, strange at once and known,
Walked by me as my guide,
The shores of which forgotten life
Trained months by my side."*

Walters

THERE are few distinctive physical features on the prairies and almost the only one noted by Kelsey is the river with the Cree name, Waskashroeseebee. He not only refers to it several times, but it is also the only thing he describes in some detail.

"August the 6th This River brents away much to ye Southward & runneth through great part of the Country . "

"August the 9th . Still shaping our course along the Riverside it Running or lying up between ye South South West . "

Kelsey is not only definite but repeats that the river came from the south. The diary shows that he was on or near the banks for about eighty-five miles. One hundred yards wide and having cut banks that showed the strata, it must have run in a deep bed, and it flowed from the open plains to the popular bluff country. The only river on the central prairies answering to this description is the South Saskatchewan. Can it be shown that this was Kelsey's river?

The first two men to make the journey from the Bay to the prairies, Kelsey and Henday, and later Cocking, were widely separated in years, but all belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company and their mission was exactly the same, to induce the remote Indians to trade at the Bay. They all left Hudson Bay in June and came to a large river in August, the South Saskatchewan we know definitely in the case of Henday and Cocking. It seems not unreasonable to think

that on the same mission and general course Kelsey's unidentified river must also have been the South Saskatchewan.

Morton states that Henday came to the South River at Clarkboro, and has this to say about the name by which he knew this stream:

"In Henday's manuscript the name must have been difficult to decipher. Laham's version makes it Wapeseekcopet. The other two make it Waskesew and Wapesew. The original must have been Waskesew or Red Deer."

Kelsey's river was Waskashreeseesbee or Red Deer River. The South Saskatchewan over sixty years later was Waskesew or Red Deer to Henday. The names are the same, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the rivers were also the same, and that the South Saskatchewan must have been Kelsey's river. The name has been popular amongst the Indians and is still used, as Waskesiu Lake in the Prince Albert National Park proves.

The diary shows that Kelsey reached the river on August 1st. For the next four days, with no travelling on the 4th, he covered about forty three miles. There is no mention of the river and he was evidently not on its banks. On August 8th he records "Today we pitcht to ye River I have spoken of before." On the 7th and 9th, lying up on the 8th, he tells us each day that he was on the river. His distance during these days was about thirty five miles.

There must be an explanation of how Kelsey could follow the river for one day, leave it for four days, come to it again and then continue with it for several more days, all on a progressive journey. I finally found what I think is a reasonable answer.

At Fish Creek the South Saskatchewan swings away to the left in a long arc that takes it many miles off its normal northeast course, to which it finally returns in a sharp bend near Fenton. The distance between these two

* For a discussion of the name of Kelsey's river see A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West*, page 244.

points on the river, Fish Creek and Fenton, is under forty miles in a straight line. Leaving the river below Fenton, Kelsey could cut across country and would easily make about forty three miles, as computed in the journal, to reach it again near Fish Creek. South of there the stream has no deep bends and Kelsey would stay with it, as the diary shows he did.

I asked Canon Ahenakew what he thought of the solution, and he said the Indians would not go round the river when they could walk straight across country from Fenton to Fish Creek in half the time and distance. The river goes as much as twelve miles off a straight line. Any of us would choose the straight course rather than follow the winding river. Kelsey's trail, on and off the river, with the distances in each case, nicely fits the pattern on the east bank for the eighty-five miles or so covered by the journey there.

When Kelsey came to the South Saskatchewan he altered his westerly course and followed the river upstream to the south. He did this not only because the Indians he sought had gone in that direction, but also because had he continued west he would shortly have had to cross the North Saskatchewan, a larger river, and would then have been in a more heavily wooded country where travel was harder and game scarce.

North of Saskatoon the two rivers parallel each other for over 100 miles, and by going south until opposite the bend where the northerly stream comes in from the west and turns north, Kelsey could proceed west to the south of it. Thus he avoided crossing the north branch and had easier going in a country where there were buffalo herds providing food. In the same way later Henday and Locking also avoided the North Saskatchewan, and like Kelsey came to the Eagle Hills. A glance at the map will make all this clear.

Kelsey reported that while the river was 100 yards wide it was "very shoal", and "unnavigable for either boat or canoe." This was in August, which to some people might seem too early for such low water on the South Saskatchewan. Burpee states that after Henday had spent a winter

1 Mr. Whitman is here relying on Burpee whose guess has been supported by J. B. MacGregor in *Behold The Shining Mountains*.

with the Blackfeet he returned by canoe down the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan rivers. When well north of Saskatoon on the latter stream on May 22nd, 1778, Henday wrote

"The river broad and deep, no islands. It appears to me to be a fine river but the Indians tell me it is almost dry in the middle of summer."

The information in Kelsey's diary and in Henday's notes, which came from the Indians who had known the river all their lives, are the earliest reports on the South Saskatchewan and agree that it can become very low in summer. The ferryman at Hague Crossing told some of us that he had seen the water so low in May and August that the ferry could not run and that a man might almost walk across. So Kelsey, trudging up the banks of the South Saskatchewan in the hot August sun, faithfully recorded that he found the stream both wide and shallow.

Having dealt with the problems connected with the South Saskatchewan as Kelsey's river, we now turn to his own story there. About 245 miles from Deering's Point, on August 1st Kelsey reached the river north of Benton, about where the Muskoday or John Smith Indian Reservation lies. The country is rolling and the east bank there, along which Kelsey would travel, is much the higher.

I was driven up the high river bank on a narrow trail, and in a few miles looked down on the sharp bend where the river comes in from the west and turns to the northeast, regaining its normal course after swinging away at Fish Creek. It would be here that Kelsey left the river, because it was not on the straight course he was taking to the south-west where he would pick it up again in a few days. On the second evening he caught up with the Indians he had been seeking. They were Eagle Brich (likely Eagle Creek) Indians, and numbered twenty-six tents, probably about 150 souls.

Kelsey does not tell us why these Indians wanted to meet him, but, like others, they were probably trying to keep him from going on and making peace with their enemies. From his visit the previous year all the tribesmen

knew that this was his mission, and to a man they were determined to prevent him from making them friends with the Naywatames.

On August 3rd they all moved on, having "no great store of victuals." They were camped all next day with the men out hunting.

In part, the record for August 4th reads:

"Today we lay still having strangers come to our tents from some Stone Indians wch was to ye Southward of us so we made a tent for our strangers & provided them some thing to Eat & some Tobacco for to smok it so they told us their news wch was yt ye Nayhaythaways had lost 3 Of their women wch ye Naywattame poets had killed ye last spring as for ye Naywattame poets they were fled so far yt they thought I should not see them "

It was another effort to keep Kelsey from going farther and making peace with the Naywatames. Next day the visitors departed and Kelsey gave them some tobacco, with a piece for any Naywatame they met, whom they were to encourage and direct to him. The record also shows that they themselves had an arrangement to meet Kelsey later.

On August 6th, after speaking about the river he was travelling on, Kelsey begins, without any break or punctuation, to tell of other rivers and lakes to the south which he had not seen. He may have heard about these from the Indians who had just visited him since they were from the south. It is the only time that Kelsey speaks of anything outside of his own experience and he must have been impressed or he would not have set it down. The record tells of a river that " is fed by a lake wch feedeth another river wch runneth to ye Southward of us and is called Mith . . . Now ye water wch runneth down this River is of Blood red Colour by ye description of those Indians wch hath seen it wch makes me to think yt it may run through some mine or other."

It is second-hand information and quite indefinite. But anyone in the vicinity of Saskatoon hearing about lakes and

rivers to the south would immediately think of Last Mountain Lake and the Qu 'Appelle river and lakes. These belong to a different watershed and the Qu 'Appelle, rising almost on the banks of the South Saskatchewan, drains Last Mountain Lake and the Qu 'Appelle Lakes into the Assiniboine, which in turn is a tributary of the Red River in Manitoba. The latter could be the river "of Blood red Colour" which Kelsey mentions last, and which fits the noted position in the above watershed. The shortened word "Mith" is generally held to mean blood.

It looks like the earliest allusion to the Red River of Manitoba, also to the far famed valley of the Qu 'Appelle with its river and chain of lovely lakes, the holiday resort of prairie people. One can think of no other system of rivers and lakes in the south that answers to the disjointed description in the diary. Evidently Kelsey did not visit the Qu 'Appelle. Whether we accept or reject this explanation makes no difference to the route we give Kelsey.

Having reached the South Saskatchewan for the second time, near Fish Creek, Kelsey was on its banks until he was in the vicinity of Clarkboro, from August 6th to the 9th. He did not travel on the 8th, and made up some gifts for the Chief of some "Mountain poets." Two scouts were dispatched to look for them with the message that Kelsey would meet them at a place forty miles ahead. It looks as though he knew of some suitable trysting place there. It may have been near Eaglehill Creek, where a great gathering of Indians took place a little later.

CHAPTER 18

IN SEARCH OF KELSEY'S SLATE MINES

*"And in his brain he hath strange places
Crannied with observation"*

Shakespeare

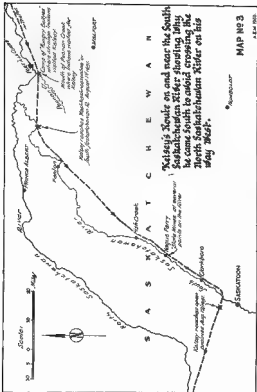
A small part of Kelsey's commission was to look for "mines, minerals and drugs and to bring samples." The instruction was contained in a letter which he received from Governor Geyer before he left Deering's Point, and would therefore be fresh in his mind when he reached the South Saskatchewan a few weeks later. He would see no rocks in strata on the way, but being a conscientious lad would be on the lookout for something to report, even if it was not outstanding. On August 7th he wrote:

"This Instant pitcht up the side of this River aforesd & in my Journey today in Several places I Saw slate mines along the side of this River by Estimation dist. 10 Miles."

Kelsey would be passing along the east bank, and any thing seen would likely be on the opposite side, which is generally higher and with cut banks. He could not examine the exposures in the clay as he passed along. Leaving London at the age of fourteen, Kelsey had probably never seen a slate quarry, though slate on the houses would be a daily sight and he would know what it looked like. The mines would not be workings but showings of something that might possibly be mined.

It might have been shale, lignite or clay that Kelsey saw, but at a distance and by the colour, the only thing he could judge by, it must have looked like slate. Even a trained man would hesitate to be definite about anything seen across a wide river, and all we can expect from an inexperienced boy is his idea of what the outcroppings looked like.

There are showings of slate on some prairie rivers, but I did not think it feasible to scout the country for such and



then lay a route for Kelsey to the place. So I stayed with the South Saskatchewan and insisted that there must be some thing on the banks where I felt sure he was travelling on August 7th.

The only exposure I learned of on the river north of the Elbow was some shale near Clarkboro, but it was second hand information and I knew of no one who had seen it. For what it was worth it looked hopeful, but some showing was needed ten miles or so north of Clarkboro to harmonize with Kelsey's position that day.

That was how matters stood after six months of long range search, when I walked in on Prof. F. H. Edmunds of the Geology Staff at Saskatoon. I wanted to know about Kelsey's slate mines. The Professor had heard about them but said there was no slate nearer than the Assiniboine. I said it might not be slate, he says own record was then read, and I was asked where he was at that time. I replied, midway between Fish Creek and Clarkboro near Hague Ferry and on the east side of the South Saskatchewan. There were other questions. Then the Professor suggested my flying downstream and said that he would be glad to come along, a piece of good fortune for me.

Before long we looked down on Saskatoon, clean, windwept and sunwashed, with the river flowing through its heart. Away to the east I saw Strawberry Valley, part of my old mission field which I had not seen for forty five years. The slate mines seen by Kelsey had not been recognized since his day and now we were searching for them from the air. If they had been anything like the lost gold mines of King Solomon they would have been discovered long ago. But slate excites nobody, and a bit of history, no matter how important it may be in the life of a people, lacks the fatal fascination of gold.

The river unwound itself as we flew north. Below skimmed some Franklin gulls, the prairie gulls that follow the plow in great numbers. The country had become a shining checkerboard of green fields, but the river, the banks and the graceful gulls were unchanged from Kelsey's day. Our interest was on the stream and it was no effort to bring Kelsey and his Indians back to its banks.

The plane swung to the right, and on a high west bank I easily picked out a narrow dark band. The Professor pointed to it and to a bare bank cut by dark ravines. There were more dark bands in the clay. These could be of no interest to the ordinary observer, but to one who knew Kelsey's diary and understood what we were looking for, they spoke an eloquent and unmistakable language. There they were, calling up to us in the sun. If they had not spoken before it was because no one had hailed them with the magic name that unlocked their secret—Henry Kelsey.

We flew beyond Fish Creek and then turned back above the east bank with a view of the west side. And there, near Hague Ferry, were more dark bands. They were not mere streaks, but appeared to be several feet wide and of considerable length, and were easily seen in the clay. South of Hague Ferry there were more bands, even darker and more definite.

I was not looking for more than I felt Kelsey had seen, outcroppings of some kind that might reasonably be thought slate from a distance. I saw several of these, as anyone may on these clay cliffs, and accepted them as the long forgotten slate mines reported by Henry Kelsey.

Professor Edmunds writes: "Kelsey might easily have referred to these scars as slate mines seen over the stream. Usually the material exposed is of boulder clay and is either yellowish grey in colour or medium dull grey, the colour depending on moisture conditions."

Later, I found an interesting note in the diary of Professor H. Y. Hind, a geologist, who went down the South Saskatchewan by canoe in 1858. He reports bands of boulders, limestone and shale on the banks after the river enters the wooded country. This was where Kelsey had reported the slate mines. Hind calls them "remarkable exposures." So there is ample professional evidence to prove that Kelsey must have seen something reasonably like what he describes on these same clay banks. Incidentally, Kelsey made the first geological observations in the west when he noted the outcroppings he called "slate mines."

Afterwards, Dr. Lewis Thomas and I went down the

river on the east side. We wanted a look at the exposures from the ground, but could get close to the stream at only a few places. Just above Hague Ferry, on the west side, we saw two dark bands in the clay. They were easily picked out though we had no opportunity to get near to them. But we were as close as Kelsey would be, and though we could not tell what the bands were composed of, we thought as he did, that they were the colour of slate.

Farther north we came to the National Park and Cemetery at Fish Creek, the scene of a skirmish in the trouble of 1885. Before entering the river, Fish Creek runs in a deep, narrow, wooded ravine that would be difficult to cross. It was impressed on us that Kelsey would not travel up on the bank, with its rough ground and tangled undergrowth, but by the side of the river. With the low water, he would find clear, even going most of the way.

As we left the river we thought that some day a highway, the Kelsey Trail, would run along the historic east bank that led Kelsey to the discovery of the prairies. From it his "slate mines" would be seen. Of little value in themselves, they remain a stationary part of the moving river scene, reminding us of the faith and courage of Henry Kelsey, and marking his trail as he pushed still deeper into the unknown continent. And the highway would also give easy access to the forgotten little battlefields that made great history for us in the Canadian West.

CHAPTER 16

DISCOVERY OF THE PRAIRIES

*The Prairies. I beheld them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the distant sight
Takes in the encircling vastness.*

Byron

KELSEY was now in the vicinity of Clarkboro, and near the end of his river trail. It is not likely that he was on the river for long after he last mentions it on August 9th. Though he was on the east side and went west he does not speak of crossing the stream.

If, instead of crossing, Kelsey had followed on upstream it is difficult to explain why the river fades completely out of the diary. The South Saskatchewan led to the open plains where pelts were both poor and scarce, and would hardly tempt a fur trader. The land of woods and waters as well as open country, the land of beaver and buffalo, as described in the journal, lay to the west along the Eagle Hills and the Battle River.

Henday and Cocking found high water and crossed the South Saskatchewan in bullboats—buffalo hides on wicker frames. Kelsey came during very low water and no special preparation would be required to cross the river. It has been suggested that he might even have walked over. In any case he was an excellent swimmer, as the Churchill diary shows, and a deep pool in a wide stream that was presently too shallow for canoes would offer no great obstacle to his progress. This may be the reason for his failure to mention the crossing. There may be no more significance in the omission than in the fact that he makes no allusion to leaving the river. He probably crossed it and left it at the same time.

Along the east bank, north of Saskatoon, there is an area of rough, broken ground that does not match Kelsey's notes on the country he found near the river. The land on the west side is more even and more like the surface Kelsey saw, which he thought trim and neat as though it had been hand-tended. One would not say that of the country Kelsey

would have found immediately if he had gone south along the east bank from his position on the river on August 9th and 10th

Hunting ahead of him, Kelsey's Indians made the first big kill of buffalo on August 9th, as he notes in the diary for the following day. "We pitcht again ye Indians having kild great store of Beast yesterday so where they lay thickest we came too dist 8 Miles "

The beasts must have been buffalo, though he does not mention them until the next big kill. Buffalo were the only large animals that herded and could be killed in numbers together. Likely they were driven from the open plains and frightened by noise until they plunged over a steep bank into the half dry river bed. This was a favourite and effective method of hunting where a sheer bank was available.

"August ye 11th This day we lay still for the women to fetch home ye meat & Dress it ye Indians Lakewise feasting & making of feasts all ye day "

Some four miles south of Clarkboro there are high cut banks on the west side of the river, and others a mile or so farther on. There are also some about eight miles north of Saskatoon. These could have been used by the Indians in their buffalo drive. The place where the animals plunged over the bank would be "Where they lay thickest," and where the band camped all day. The women brought home the meat that lay some distance off while the men celebrated their return to the buffalo country in a day long feast.

Kelsey gives no description of the buffalo here and expresses no surprise at seeing a new animal, a casualness that is no doubt due to the fact that he had seen the herds the previous year. The buffalo are mentioned with some description in the poem telling of the first journey.

When the company moved on the following day the river was evidently left behind and it is not mentioned again. Kelsey had travelled in the parklands since he entered them at Nipawin, but now the poplar groves were becoming fewer and smaller and the grass shorter. The

country was changing again. He was on the verge of the buffalo plains, the treeless prairies. The record reads:

"August ye 12th Now we pitcht again & about noon ye ground begins to grow heathy & barren in fields of about half a Mile over Just as if they had been Artificially made with fine groves of Poplo growing round ym we went today by Estimation 10 Miles."

Kelsey was then some miles to the north of Saskatoon. Explaining the nature of the country there, Dr. Mitchell states that there is a belt of gravel which is crossed by the highway. It is supposed to be a former delta where the North and South Saskatchewan rivers entered an old lake, and where, shifting their courses, they left gravel and rafted boulders over a considerable area. The thin soil results in "barren fields" and small but "fine groves of poplo" as described by Kelsey. One has the impression that where attempts have been made at cultivation, the fields have gone right back to their original condition.

I had crossed the country there a number of times and was always struck by the close way in which it answers to Kelsey's description of the plains he found on August 12th. In all the northern prairies I saw that summer there was nothing quite like this part. Even in that wet summer when everything elsewhere was lush and green, the land there was still "heathy and barren."

Dr. Russell gives this opinion about the locality in which Kelsey noted a change and of the grasses he would see there:

"The place where the land began to grow heathy and barren with fine groves of poplar would likely be between Duck Lake and Saskatoon. The grass here consists of many species and would be what people call prairie wool. It is a short growth of various grasses and herbs found on dry uplands."

The location given by Dr. Russell to the new country Kelsey saw, between Duck Lake and Saskatoon, agrees with his position on the route we have been following. But since Kelsey travelled by the river, likely close to the water, he

would not notice the change until he left it, perhaps not far from Clarkboro.

The same kind of poplar bluffs Kelsey saw may still be seen there today. They are generally small and many of them are quite round. The trees are not large and have clean boles, and there being no undergrowth, one can see clear through beneath. The foliage seems to be set up on stilts.

The lower branches of poplars die naturally and cattle rub them off and keep the undergrowth trampled down. Buffalo would do the same in Kelsey's day, and the bluffs may have looked much the same then as they do now. They are quite striking and catch the interest of the traveler. Seeing the clean poplars and the clear ground that seems to have been mown, one might imagine, as Kelsey did, that everything had been "Artificially made."

Kelsey would be a dozen miles or so north of Saskatoon when he noticed the change in the country. He may even have been nearer the city if the eight miles he travelled to the buffalo feast on August 10th, likely close to the river, took him south as it may have done. Saskatoon lies just south of the natural poplar bluff belt, and though there are groves there today, when I first saw the city it sat on a treeless plain. As Kelsey looked south his view would be across the open plains. He would see the high ground on which Mayfair and Nutana now stand.

It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that then, or at some later time during his two years in the country, Kelsey may have visited the site of Saskatoon. He may even have crossed the campus on which the University of Saskatchewan now stands. If he wintered near the Forks, as there is some reason for believing he may have done, he could have gone on one of the expeditions the Indians used to make to hunt buffalo at Moose Woods to the south, a journey that would have taken him across the ground on which Saskatoon stands.

We are not forgetting that Kelsey may have been at the same place the year before. There is every reason to think that he was following the same route on this second

journey, and that the story here would be much the same. But we have nothing more for the first visit than the few lines in the rhyme—no location, no diary, no dates.

As it now stands, the historical discovery of the Canadian prairies, the open buffalo plains, took place not far north of Saskatoon. We know the approximate place but cannot be more definite, since Kelsey's Indians were hunting and he was not on a trail. It was high noon when Kelsey noted the change in the country, and the date was August 12th, 1691. This would be a week or so later by the present calendar reckoning. The sky may have clouded toward evening for it rained all next day.

One thinks of it as having been a typical August day, warm, and perhaps even hot, with a breeze stirring the short grass, and the silent shadows of white clouds chasing each other across the bright plains. Rolling away until lost in the haze on the far horizon lay the true prairies of the west—treeless, vast and mysterious.

A lone lad in the heart of the continent, 1,000 miles from the nearest white men, who is to tell what was in the mind of Henry Kelsey that day? Perhaps he stood silent for a prophetic moment gazing across the prairies into the far future.

Kelsey's true position on the continent will be better understood when it is remembered that the prairies are one on both sides of the international boundary, and that the buffalo ranges of the Missouri watershed, like those of the Saskatchewan, had never yet been visited by a man from the outside world. In all those vast plains, the spring and winter wheatlands of today, Kelsey was not only first but was almost fifty years ahead of the next white man.

The white lad who appeared with an Indian band on the banks of the South Saskatchewan pointed to the end of the great lone land and the buffalo herds, even though there would be no change for a long time, and the best part of two centuries would elapse before the herds had completely vanished. Travellers and traders followed. Railways and towns came, men cursed dust storms, prayed for rain,

reaped astronomical crops of grain, drilled for gas and oil, built cities and grew rich. It is scarcely true to say that meanwhile the boy who discovered the country and began it all had been forgotten, rather that he had never been known to be remembered by anyone.

Because the heart of the Great Central Plains of North America was first reached on its banks, and the first prairie trail for the coming millions was blazed there, the South Saskatchewan will be known as the River of Discovery. The City of Saskatoon will be aware that the discovery of the prairies at her gates was an event of continental as well as of national importance. She will be proud to be known as the City of Henry Kelcey.

CHAPTER 17

ACROSS THE BUFFALO PLAINS

World of the bear's freedom, home of the Indian's soul"

—Frederic Johnson

ONE of the greatest buffalo ranges in the west lay between the South Saskatchewan and the Eagle Hills. Though the herds were not always present at such places, and at times had to be sought over long distances, yet they could often be seen in unbelievable numbers, so that the whole country seemed to be moving. In the late fall of 1872, hunting near Eaglehill Creek, F. W. Butler states that, though greatly reduced in numbers, the animals were still innumerable, and that a single hunt recently had yielded 600 cows.

On these same plains Kelsey frequently mentions "great store of Buffallo." He tells how the Indians hunted "these Beast on ye Barren ground." The men would quietly surround a herd in a wide circle, and gradually close in. When near enough they would start shooting and would continue until the panic-stricken animals finally broke out.

This was evidently a different method from that used when they were on the river where the animals could be driven over a bank. They had just reached the "Barren ground," and had to have another way of taking buffalo there, which is his reason for describing it.

The day after the discovery of the prairie Kelsey wrote "August ye 13th It Raining very hard caused us to lye still to day." They were a considerable band now and the rain would not prevent the usual visiting from tent to tent, set up on the open plain. Next day, in clear skies, they continued the journey, hunting as they went wherever the herds took them.

"August ye 15th This Instant one Indian Lying a dying & withall a murmuring web was amongst the Indians Because I would not agree for ym to go to warre so I taking

it into Consideration cut some tobacco & call'd all ye Old
dons to my tent telling ym yt it was not ye way for ym to
have the use of English guns & other things & yt I nor they
should not go near ye Governr unless they ceast from war
ring so .ay still to day "

The urge to go on the warpath was growing now that
they were nearing their enemies, but Kelsey stood his
ground and placated them with a gift of tobacco.

Next day the Indian who had taken ill was no better,
and "Not knowing wch would Conquer life or Death lay
still to day our people going out hunting but had small
success."

"August ye 17th Last night death ceased & this morn-
ing his body was burned according to their way they making
A great feast for him yt did it now after yt ye flesh was
burned his Bones were taken & buried with Loggs set up
round of about ten foot Long so we pitcht to day near 14
Miles & came to they holding it not good to stay by ye
Dead "

The word ceased, has been written over another word,
probably seized, the word that appears in the copy of the
journal presented to the Parliamentary Committee in 1749.
"Death seized" seems more likely than "Death ceased."

Next day Kelsey sent off two scouts to look for those
he had dispatched on the 8th of August in search of the
"mountain poets." They were unreported and he feared
that some harm might have overtaken them. Meanwhile the
band kept travelling and hunting

"August ye 20th To day we pitcht to ye outtermost
Edge of ye wooda this plain affords Nothing but short
Round sticky grass & Buffillo . "

A few days before, Kelsey had noted a change in the
country and now he found the ground becoming even "more
Barren." The last of the scattered bluffs were being left
behind and they were entering a plain with "short round
sticky grass," a different kind of coverage. Dr R. C. Russell
gives his opinion regarding this grass:

"I think Kelsey here is probably referring to the "bunch grasses" typical of the drier parts of the prairies. Where precipitation is scanty and winds and sun cause rapid evaporation the bunch grasses are common on the plains. The grass is short and grows in small round clumps with small bare spaces between and looks quite different from the solid even sward of creeping stemmed grasses.

"I do not know in what sense Kelsey uses the word "sticky" but in late summer the leaf blades of this grass often become sharp-pointed and brittle so that they are harsh to the touch and may stick into one's clothing. Possibly it was the Speargrass that Kelsey particularly had in mind, since Speargrass seed is notorious for the way it sticks into the coats of animals and the clothing of people, and becomes a real nuisance by penetrating the flesh."

Those who know the prairies will recognise the grasses described by Dr Russell, and understand Kelsey's allusion to them.

Kelsey and his Indians were now on a vast plain with no woods in sight. Far away in every direction the sky met the level plains. They were out in the blue, alone with the sunshine and the untainted breeze. It was late August and the prairies were at their kindest and best. The day would close with the unearthly colours of a prairie sunset. Then the stars would shine—strange, near and bright. While the camp slept Kelsey must often have lain awake, wondering about what would happen now that his Indians were nearing their enemies. It must have been a source of great anxiety.

For some weeks Kelsey had been anxious to meet other bands of wandering Stone Indians likely to discuss the winter trapping and to make sure that they went to trade at the Ray the next spring. While he was halted for a day a message came from Washa, chief of the long sought "Mountain poets," to the effect that he would meet Kelsey when he next moved on.

Next day all the scattered groups came together, and eighty tents, probably 500 men, women and children, were camped on the open prairie. Probably Kelsey had not before

seen such a great gathering of Indians, but it would now be possible because it was the height of the season with food available. The conical buffalo hide tents would be held up by poles that had been brought along from the poplar bluffs they had left behind. The camp would be a bedlam with the barking of dogs, semi-naked people running hither and thither, and shouts and laughter coming from different groups.

No doubt Kelsey made satisfactory arrangements about future hunting and trading of beaver. But now they had something to ask of him, and at the end of a feast in his honour requested permission to go to war. Now that they were together they felt a strong urge to seek out their enemies. Kelsey rejected their request, the Governor would never consent to war.

A highly important entry in the diary indicates the direction in which Kelsey was travelling when they made camp.

"August ye 25th . we having travelled to day by Estimation 12 Miles yet not reacht ye woods on ye other side this plain running through great part of ye Country & lyeth along near East & West."

It is clearly stated that he was crossing an east-west plain lying between woods. The last time we were sure of Kelsey's direction he was on the river and going south. Now, fifty miles farther along, we find him going west. From strong indications we had assumed that his course was west, and that he must have crossed the South Saskatchewan. Now we are sure of this. The plain, we are told, was forty six miles wide, a distance that is great enough to make us certain of his general direction.

Soon the lack of food, always a problem when many of them came together, made itself felt and the hundreds of Indians who had been together became scattered again, each band taking its own way, some of them going on ahead.

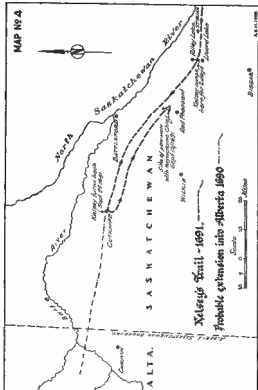
Before long Kelsey had crossed the treeless plain and entered the woods at the foot of what we judge were the

Eagle Hills He estimates the distance he had covered from the river, the South Saskatchewan, at over 100 miles, which is more than would be necessary on anything like a straight line But this can be explained by the fact that their main interest had been the hunt Some of the Indians were newly back to the buffalo range after having been at the Bay, and had nearly starved on the journey Now, they all followed the chase wherever it led them and lived well again Some progress would be made each day to the west, and it would not matter if it did not add up to many miles on the straight

Kelsey had been travelling some miles south of the North Saskatchewan which, however, he did not see at least not on this trip He had been north of such present-day districts as Perdue, Asquith and Biggar, and south of Dalmeny and Langham The land is settled and not treeless now But there are few hamlets and no highway or railroad runs west on the route of the first white man.

Kelsey's trail here was followed by the Barr Colonists in the spring of 1903, in one of the most colourful migration stories the west has known They were English, some of them from London, like Kelsey's own town, and had little idea of life on the prairie They had never heard of Kelsey, and did not know that they were seeking their land of promise on a trail blazed by a countryman of their own

On reaching the Eagle Hills, the Colonists took the north trail between the hills and the Saskatchewan, while Kelsey went west on the other side of the hills But they were not far apart, and their goal lay in the same direction Kelsey and the Colonists had a deal in common, and no doubt their spirits have met and haunt the old trail to the Golden West.



CHAPTER 18

EAGLE HILLS AND THE THIRD PRAIRIE LEVEL

"Farther than vision ranges, farther than eagles fly
Sketches the land of beauty, arches the perfect sky"

—Pauline Johnson

FOR hundred of miles the Missouri Coteau runs across the country in a northwest direction and lifts it up from the second to the third prairie level. The Eagle Hills mark the rise there, and though of no great height are a definite elevation from the east, and a landmark far across the plains. As the whole country remains high the hills are little more than a gentle slope when seen from the south and west.

Kelsey's record of the arrival at the foot of the Eagle Hills and of the camp in the woods for two days reads as follows

"August ye 27th Today we pitcht again & got to ye woods on ye other side ye Plain being about 46 miles over our Journey not Extending 6 miles."

"August ye 28th This day we lay still ye Indians being willing for to go hunt Buffallo because there is none of these Beast in ye woods so I condescended to it so I called six Indians & fitted ym out wth tobacco & powder & shott & bid ym go seek for some Naywatame poets & if so be yt they found ym I would Reward ym sufficiently "

"August ye 29th Thus Instant we lay still for ye women to fetch home Meat & dress it our Indians Likewise going a Beavour hunting for in these woods there is abundance of small ponds of water of which there is hardly one Escapes without a Beavour house or two our people having kilfd great store today "

The treeless plain they had just crossed was amongst the finest of the buffalo ranges; but the Eagle Hills had the best beaver colonies, and for the first time the Indians

caught beaver. It was beaver pelts that were important now, but the men asked Kelsey's permission to hunt buffalo too. He granted the request because there were no buffalo in the woods. This ought to settle the question that has often been asked as to whether it was the buffalo of the woods or the buffalo of the plains that Kelsey saw.

From now on they would be able to take beaver on one hand and buffalo on the other, something that will help us to determine the course he followed. Close to Naywatams territory at the foot of the height, Kelsey sent off no fewer than six scouts with gifts to look for these tribesmen with the promise of reward to those who found them.

For several reasons I had missed the eastern end of the Eagle Hills during my first visit, and thought of flying out from Saskatoon. But I did not know particularly what to look for from the air. It was evident that a personal visit would have to be made later, and that I ought to continue my investigations in the meantime.

I had thought of the ascent to the hills as being a long gentle slope of many miles, and that on a front of considerable length it might not be possible to tell where Kelsey made the climb. But I found that Palliser in 1858 speaks of the Eagle Hills as rising 600 to 800 feet in three to four miles. Palliser's party were using horses and carts, and it seems likely that on such a definite climb there would be a trail.

Thus raised the interesting possibility that Kelsey and the many Indians with him at that time might have followed a trail to the heights instead of scrambling individually up through the bushes here and there. One would almost expect an ancient path on which the Indians took advantage of the easiest grades, and I began to wonder if there was any evidence of the existence of such. Not having been there myself, I would have to find an observant man whose knowledge of the country went back to the days before the sod was broken.

Finally I heard of Mr. J. H. Megaffin of Baljennie, who had spent ten years in the Mounted Police before the turn of the century, and who had travelled all the old trails. Over

fifty years ago Mr. Megaffin started to ranch in a wide country that included the end of the Eagle Hills. One dark, wet night in a suburb of Vancouver, where he was visiting, I found Mr. Megaffin. We spent an evening together going over the country at the Eagle Hills escarpment.

Mr. Megaffin recalled an old freighting trail up the heights. It began to rise west of Struan and wound up to the north of Lizard Lake. He knew of no other trail near there. To the north a trail would have led into the hills where going would be difficult. But this trail led up to the edge of the hills and the woods where the country could be travelled.

I was able to show from my notes that Palliser's map of his route up the heights ran about where Mr. Megaffin remembered the old trail lay. We discussed the matter over a map and Mr. Megaffin thought that Kelsey, of whom he had not heard, and Palliser, had probably gone up on the same trail, and that it was likely the old freighting trail he knew. He thought that in the first place it had been an Indian trail. Coming from the east, the trail, just about west of Struan, was at the place where one would strike the hills on a route that was possible to the west.

In thinking of a trail in Kelsey's day we must remember that there were no horses on our prairies until about forty years after his visit. He does not mention dogs as carriers though they were used in a trace which would make some mark on the ground, but most of the burdens were probably borne by the people themselves. It was a long time before oxen and carts appeared to make the deeply rutted tracks, remnants of which we can still see. A main trail in Kelsey's time would be a single foot-trodden path, fairly well marked, and on an established route between important places. When the freighters came they would sometimes find it convenient to follow the chief Indian trails, which would take them by the easiest way.

Now for the third year I set out again to trace the Kelsey Trail first hand—this time to have a look at a short stretch of it on the Eagle Hills. I had the geography of the escarpment well in mind and knew what to look for. From

the hamlet of Struan a rough clay road runs west and in a few miles reaches the foot of the heights. It was here that the open plain ended and that Kelsey and his band made camp for two days.

I had thought that the slope would be continuous, and had wondered how there could be so many ponds and beaver as described by Kelsey. But on the spot I saw that there were ridges on the plain and that these ran along the slope all the way up, while behind them were numerous sloughs which, with the poplar bluffs, made an ideal beaver country. The rise was less steep than I had expected, but the height was commanding.

A closer search than I could make at the time might have revealed some evidence of the old trail where it begins to rise and where Kelsey was camped. I knew it could not be far from the present grade.

Taking the new road up the slope, which Kelsey had covered on a trail, I turned now and then to look back. Near the top a vast panorama of green fields lay open to the gaze until, lost in the far horizon. The summit, some 500 feet above the plain, would be the highest viewpoint Kelsey had known all the way from the Bay, his route never having been much above water level.

Kelsey would have little time to admire the land of promise spread out at his feet or to dream of a great future there. The Indians were getting out of hand again and threatening to go to war now that they had reached enemy territory. He would be too anxious about the problems and dangers of the moment to have eyes or thoughts for anything else.

Driving through woods on the heights I came to the home of Ben Riley, at the end of Riley Lake, and was given a hearty welcome. Before long a car drove up and Ben went out to give trail directions, and mentioned that a man inside was telling about the country having been discovered by a lad of whom Ben said he had never heard. One of the men had read the Crusade for Kelsey, and Ben came back wanting to hear the story.

Kelsey's diary for August 30th, which tells of his moving on up the heights, was read "Now we pitch again directing our Course into the woods it being all poplo & birch & high Champion land with ponds as aforesaid our Indians depending themselves some abutting of beast & some of beaver Dist 8 Miles "

I wanted to know if the description fitted this area. Ben read it himself and said that with poplar, birch, water, high land, buffalo and beaver, it looked exactly like the surrounding country. He added that not many districts would fit the description and none any better than their own. Answering a question I said the "champion land" likely meant champaign land high and fairly level with open reaches amongst the woods, such as they had here. It was a rather liberal interpretation of the term champaign, but perhaps not unreasonable.

Ben said the old trail left the plain not far south of the present Struan road and came up the slope to the northwest. There were many sloughs and the trail was very winding. From the foot of the ridge in a straight line to Riley's farm would be about six miles and he thought that Kelsey's eight miles that day would bring him to his place.

Ben had been living there since 1911, and had chosen the site because he thought it a good place to build, a flat piece of land at the edge of woods, close to the lake but high enough to be dry. He thought it must have been an ideal camping place for the Indians.

I asked if there was any other good campsite near, and Ben later showed me a spot on a slope where he had known some Indians to tent. It did not seem a very suitable place, and to the suggestion that they were there because he was on their old camping ground, Ben said he thought this probable. They liked to be near water. Ben had not seen Indian relics around the homestead, but had paid little attention to small things like arrowheads. Buffalo skulls and bones were numerous when he came.

Parts of the old trail could still be seen on the slope, Ben said, and I was surprised when he pointed to a bit of it, plainly visible, coming right down into his yard. It was

better to look at such eloquent evidence in silence for a while than to ask any more questions. Out of the long ago it seemed to answer them all itself. And one wondered why anyone should pass such a good camp-site as Ben's place, a natural resting spot, and the first after the long stiff climb up the height.

Ben's land lies between Riley Lake and Lizard Lake, a little to the south. A glance at the map will show that a trail to the northwest would naturally round the south end of Riley Lake. Some old maps show the trail there. Ben did not think Kelsey would be traveling north of his place on the way west. After Palliser came up the trail he spent a night at an unnamed lake about two miles long. This must have been Riley Lake, not named until Ben's day, and the camp most likely would be the site of Ben's home.

In the house we considered the whole situation, several others taking part in the discussion. Nobody could suggest a better campsite for Kelsey in the vicinity than the one we were on. The diary telling of his climb to the heights would be written that night where we were, perhaps on the very spot on which we sat. And the same would be true of the record for the following day, when the party were busy with preparations to continue the journey and did not break camp.

"August ye 31st This day ye Indians made a feast desiring of me to be a post to a parcel of Indians wch was to ye Northward of us to desire ym to stay for us telling me yt my word would be taken before an Indians although he went so we lay still to day."

Kelsey consented to go in search of the Indians, evidently part of the large company that had gathered on the plains a week or so earlier and that had gone on ahead.

The first camp on Eagle Hills was in Naywatame country, and here Kelsey was given a bodyguard of eight Indians, one of them an interpreter who could speak both languages. They must have been well warned by the Governor to look after Kelsey, and were not going to miss a reward or incur a displeasure by any neglect of the lad he

had sent amongst them. Now that the Naywatames were at hand a new phase of the journey had begun

The young explorer had reached the third level of the prairies, the prairies of western Saskatchewan and Alberta that rise gently to the foothills of the Rockies. It is a land of wheat and oil today, where such cities as Edmonton and Calgary flourish

The beginning of the Eagle Hills, with the old trail winding up and the site of Kelsey's camp on the height, where he led the way into all the western plains, is of historic interest and an important part of our story. It will be so regarded in years to come

When Kelsey again took the trail, he was seeking some Indians to the northward. It is not necessary to think that he abruptly changed his course from west to north. More likely he went northwest, which was the direction of the hills he was following. The first day out from Riley Lake they travelled nearly thirty miles and spent the night in a small "popple wood which standeth out from ye main ridge of woods because these Indians are greatly afraid of their enemies." Kelsey would sleep in the midst of his newly appointed guards.

The various bands were following each other, with good hunting for both buffalo and beaver. Hunger and hardship were memories now, sweltering days were over and mellow Indian summer was at hand. Life was full far out in the great lone land in that marvellous interlude when for a few weeks nature is at peace with the elements before the savage storms of winter break. They passed along through the present Red Pheasant and Mosquito Reservations, breathing the winery air, in a make-believe world of changing colours and flaming sunsets.

But if nature was at peace there was no peace in the minds of the Indians. In enemy territory they were expecting an attack at any time, especially at dawn, the favourite hour for a raid, and were nervous, excited and constantly on the alert.

It was now September, and as the weather turned and

denly cold and raw, Kelsey lit a fire for warmth. There is no mention of rain but there may have been some; or perhaps at that time of year a slight fall of snow overnight had softened the ground which had become so mulched by the trampling feet of a herd of buffalo that the trail of those ahead was lost. Kelsey sent two men to look for the trail. It was finally found and in the evening he came up with the band he had been following.

Next morning the men made a feast for him, to hear what message he had brought. Meanwhile, Kelsey had seen through the whole plan—they wanted to come together so that they would be strong enough to go to war. Kelsey once more warned them that the Governor "would not trade with them if they did not cease from warring."

For some time Kelsey's scouts had been looking for the Naywatamez, and on September 5th the scouts returned, "Crying out just like a Crane." The old men lighted pipes and went out to them, "Crying as if they had been stob'd for Joy they had found their enemies ye young men having brought some old arrows to verifie wt they had been about." It seems as though a Naywatame arrow could be identified by the way in which it was made or by the material used.

It looked as though things were getting out of hand again and Kelsey brought out the Governor's pipe, telling them that they ought to employ their time in getting beaver. The answer was that they could make no peace with men who were so low that they "knew not ye use of Cannoes." Kelsey could do nothing more for the present and held his tongue, but he did not cease to work for peace.

CHAPTER 19

END OF THE TRAIL AND THE PEACE POWWOW

"How small a thing is man
In all this world gone vast,
That he should hope and plan
And dream his dream should last."

—Bliss Carman

I had not yet been in the heart of the Eagle Hills, and went there from Battleford which is at the edge of the hills and on the Saskatchewan. Mr J D Herbert, who was then in charge of the Museum at Battleford talked of the history of the district as we drove along. There has been a good deal of cultivation on steep slopes and light soil owing to the hunger for land. But the hills looked much as I had expected to see them, with deep valleys, rank grass, sloughs, poplar trees and small streams, an ideal beaver country. No wonder Kelsey's Indians killed 'great stores' here.

For miles we followed winding trails and I saw every thing that Kelsey mentions except birch trees. Finally, with a shout I saw a clump of birch. The picture was complete. The trees were small, but my companion told of an old axe man who recalled cutting mature birch there at the turn of the century. It is the only hardwood growing there and the larger trees have long since disappeared, but the Indians found ample birch bark for their canoes on the lower ground. It stirred me to be in these hills that had seen so much trapping and trading, often with the spilling of human blood, but I was there because the Eagle Hills had witnessed a colourful chapter in the Kelsey story.

My next excursion was west through the Eagle Hills and along the valley of the Battle River, my companion and guide being Mr Campbell Innes, Saskatchewan's member of the Historic Sites Board. After a long pull up the main road we left the hills and entered a wide level plain. It would be here somewhere, perhaps on the Sweetgrass Indian Reserve, that we would pick up Kelsey's Trail, where he had found the ground churned up by the feet of innumerable buffalo.

We were well into old Blackfoot territory. For genera-

tions war parties had swept up and down the valley—the disputed ground, as the name of the Battle River indicates, of the warring tribes. The next white man there, Henday, in 1754, knew the Battle River by an Indian name that meant "the river where the people fight one another." Kelsey does not mention the Battle River, but his diary shows that the country there was one of tribal bitterness and bloodshed, and his Stone Indians were continually on their guard. Across the plain we could see Cutknife Hill where Poundmaker defeated a Sarcee Chief named Cutknife, and where he later fought off General Otter's force in a bitter eight-hour battle that stirred all Canada.

There are no single geographical features in Kelsey's diary here that could be identified. But for a long distance he had been able to hunt buffalo on one hand and beaver on the other. Dr. Mitchell had stated that this would be possible on the long line of the Eagle Hills and Battle River. And he had mentioned only one place where for one hundred miles or so buffalo and beaver country were contiguous—the Touchwood Hills. But the Eagle Hills had more streams and beaver, and better answered Kelsey's description of killing "great store."

At Cutknife town, Mr. Woodward of the Municipal Office told us that buffalo remains were plentiful around the townsite in 1913, and that beaver had been abundant on the Battle river a few miles away. At Freemont, Mr. Wright of Hilldale Municipal Office told the same story of abundant buffalo remains and of beaver that were plentiful not far away. He had watched some of the latter from a bridge recently. Mr. Wright also gave the surprising information that there are more trees today than there were when the country was settled forty years ago.

Dr. Mitchell, whose people had homesteaded in the valley, had recalled that buffalo remains were abundant, the bones in some places being in piles with the gelatinous matters still adhering to the skulls. He thought that the country just south of the Battle River must have been a great buffalo range, also that it had originally been a treeless plain. As we have seen, this is borne out by the testimony of the early settlers. And it also agrees with Kelsey's own

record here when he came out of the woods where they had been hunting beaver and found an open plain.

"Sept^r ye 7th This day we pitcht again & got through ye woods this ledge not being above 30 Miles through but we made it a great deal more by reason we kept in it for to hunt beavour & to come altogether this plain being in ye same Nature of ye other wch we had past before our Journey not Extending 10 Miles."

The other plain to which Kelsey refers was evidently the open prairie which he crossed during August 22 to 27 before he reached the Eagle Hills. The country he was in now was the same—a wide plain, bare and open. It would be the plain of which Cutknife is the centre. I had been surprised at its extent and much of it seems dead level. There are a few poplar bluffs, but in Kelsey's day it would be treeless and open, a typical short grass buffalo country.

On his route here Henday tells us that he hunted animals of the woods and those of the plains, which is exactly what Kelsey had done. The trails of the two men were almost identical through this area.

There are grounds for thinking that Kelsey's two journeys followed the same route, but that he went farther west the first year. The reasons for this will be discussed later. According to my calculation we were now, in the vicinity of Carruthers, beyond the place where Kelsey turned back in 1691, which is the journey we have been following. But it was decided to keep going west for some distance in the belief that we would still be on the trail of his first journey—that recounted in the poem.

All day long sudden storms had swept the valley and we were late arriving at Marmden, the last town in Saskatchewan. We thought of halting there for the night, but a temporary break in the weather decided us to go on into Alberta, luckily as it turned out.

On the way we got a glimpse of Manito Lake, out of which the Indians formerly believed the buffalo came in endless numbers. Some strange looking tanks in the wheat

fields indicated that we were in a Saskatchewan oil belt. Soon we halted on the rim of the great saucer-like valley in which the Battle River runs.

We had crossed the Meridian and were in Alberta. Somewhere ahead of us, we judged, Kelsey had made a peace pact with the tribes at the end of his first prairie trail in September, 1690. For me it was also the end of a long trail that had begun months ago at The Pas in Manitoba. From the roadside I plucked a wild rose, Alberta's flower, and put it in my coat. Roses had no doubt welcomed Kelsey near the same place.

There had been brief periods of sunshine between violent storms during the day and a heavy cloud now hung low in the west. It looked like more trouble. Suddenly, the setting sun burst through a rift and flooded the land with a strange, unearthly light.

We were the only signs of life in a wide scene that seemed to have been floodlit as though for the final act of some high drama. And who is to say that the end of the Kelsey Trail was not just that?

As we turned to go it was my companion, Campbell Innes, who said, "We're finishing in a blaze of glory."

We spent the night in Marsden, and on the way back next day came to the district in which Kelsey had reached his western limit on the second prairie journey. His estimated distance from the east end of the Eagle Hills was eighty-one miles and one judges that he was then somewhere north of Cutknife town and between the highway and Battle River. Kelsey was still on the way west seeking the Naywatames when four of their scouts came up in the afternoon of September 8th and told him that their band was not ahead but some two days travel behind.

The Naywatames had been reported before, but now Kelsey met the first of them and it galvanized him into a nervous activity. He received the strangers very kindly, pledged his own Indians not to interfere with them, and made plans to meet the Naywatame band. Camp was made

for the night, and in the morning Kelsey and his Stone Indians, led by the Naywatame scouts, retraced their steps to the southeast.

On Kelsey's outward journey here, and when he heard the news about the Naywatames and turned back, I thought I knew just what was in his mind. In the midst of beaver and buffalo hunting through woods and over plains in enemy country and constantly on the alert. Kelsey was possessed of a single idea—peace with the Naywatames, peace at all costs between them and his Stones and Nayhaythaways. It was for this that he had travelled far and endured much, and he was taking every precaution to see that nothing went wrong at last to rob him of success.

On September 10th the Naywatame scouts told Kelsey that they could make better time if they went on ahead and prepared for his arrival, and to this he consented. It was evening next day when Kelsey came to the Naywatame camp numbering eleven tents, probably about sixty souls, and about the same size as his own company, which he tells us consisted of twelve tents.

This marks the last of Kelsey's travels as recorded in the diary. He had left Deering's Point on July 15th, and in fifty-eight days had travelled an estimated distance of 585 miles—the last fifty-four being a return on his trail. He had finally found the tribesmen he had sought all summer, and the stage was set for the vital peace powwow, with an account of which the diary ends.

Kelsey's eighty miles out from the end of Eagle Hills and his fifty-four miles back would bring him roughly twenty-five to thirty miles to the west of his starting place. It would be on the west slope of Eagle Hills that the palaver was held—northwest of Biggar, northeast of Wilkie, and probably near Red Pheasant, where the present Indian Reservations lie.

The great day dawned, September 12th. Kelsey was busy with preparations. The presents for the Chief had to be artistically arranged. The trip back had been so hurried that there had been no time for hunting, and he was now so short of provisions that he could not invite his guest for a

meal One wonders if Kelsey had any breakfast himself that morning, but the excitement and high hopes likely made food a secondary consideration. Many a deal has been put over with a good meal, a smoke, a speech and a gift. Kelsey had everything but the meal, so he "Filled ye pipe wch ye Governr had sent me wth tobacco & then sent for ye Capt so then I made him a speech "

They met in Kelsey's tent and in all solemnity Kelsey and the Chief settled down to the powwow. The pipe of peace went the rounds. There would be no hurry about any thing, no sign that something else had to be attended to or someone else seen. There was nobody in the world but themselves and no other business in hand. The smoke lingered about them as they leisurely puffed and created an atmosphere of good will. Outside, the mellow September sunlight and the gentle prairie breeze also spoke of peace.

After a time came Kelsey's speech. He had to make use of the interpreter he had brought along, having had no opportunity to know the Naywatame tongue, though he had likely learned a few words with which to greet the Chief. Kelsey had mastered the orator's art, so dear to the Indians in their conclaves, and he could speak with the best of them. Proceeding easily and unhurried, spreading compliments by the way, he unfolded his theme.

It was a difficult task, trying to make peace between the Naywatames and their ancient enemies who had recently killed six tents of the Chief's people. But bygones were to be bygones, and if the Nayhaythaways did not stop killing his friends, the Naywatames, the Governor would not trade with them any more. It was a good speech, and it smoothed the way for something that pleased the Chief even more, the gifts that Kelsey had carried all summer for this high occasion.

" I presented him with a present coat & sash cup & one of my guns wth knives awls & tobacco wth small quantities of powder & shot & part of all such things as ye Governr had sent me so he seemed to be very well pleased & told me he had forgott wt had past although they had kill'd most of his kindred & relations & likewise told me he was sorry he had not wherewithall for to make me Restitution

for wt I had given him but he would meet me at Deerings Point ye next spring & go with me to ye factory . . ."

Kelsey had made peace amongst the Indians, and the Naywatames had promised to come and trade at the Bay. Twice over he had made a long journey to achieve this end and at last had seen his efforts crowned with success. The tribesmen would hunt furs all winter, and Kelsey could now set out to spend a busy winter trapping somewhere. He must have been highly gratified with the results of his mission.

Quite likely, while Kelsey and the Chief were pledging friendship in the tent, Kelsey's Indians outside were thinking of some plan to bring an end to this peace nonsense once for all. But they would take their time about it, and not rush into bloodshed as they had done after the first peace was signed.

However, sometime during the winter two of the Chief's people were killed by the Nayhaythaways and he was afraid to go down to Deering's Point. The following May, when Kelsey was there awaiting his arrival, he received a message from the Chief telling him what had happened and promising to come down the following spring. Meanwhile he would appreciate a gift of tobacco. Thus for the second time a peace pact had been wiped out in blood, and Kelsey was not in a position to try again.

Looking back on my visit to that now quiet countryside, with its rich fields of grain and the friendship existing between Indians and white men, I feel that Kelsey's hope of peace on that ancient bloodsoaked ground seems to have been no impractical dream after all.

CHAPTER 21

WHERE DID KELSEY SPEND THE WINTER?

*"In a lone cabin sheltered in snow
I bide a winter well content,
Till forth again I needs must go
Called by an unknown continent."*

—Charles G. D. Roberts

AFTER the first tribal peace in September, 1690, which I believe most likely took place near the Battle River in Alberta, we find Kelsey a few weeks later at Deering's Point, putting up a cross. The question immediately arises as to how he made the 600-mile trip back to his starting place. There is no diary to tell us of this, nor of where he spent the winter.

Kelsey had taken two months, mostly on foot, to make the outward journey, and if he walked back it would be another hard trip and winter would be upon him before it was completed. In a few weeks the rivers would be frozen and snow would mantle the land.

The North Saskatchewan was not far away, a broad highway that would take him right back to Deering's Point. Any of us in Kelsey's position would have chosen to travel this way by canoe, and no doubt that is what Kelsey did. It would be a delightful trip, day after day, moving down with the river, after the long westward tramp in the heat of summer. Gone now the tattering winds, the flies and mosquitoes. The banks and islands would be taking on the colours of fall, the poplars a golden yellow, the bushes reds and purples, and the passing scenes would be double by reflection on the calm reaches of the great stream.

Kelsey must have seen the sites of such places as the Battlefords, Carlton, and Prince Albert, and he would pass the Forks, Fort à la Corne, and Nipawin. With the river in his favor he may have stayed with it all the way instead of crossing Saskeram Lake, and would finally come to rest in the mouth of the little Pasquia at Deering's Point where he had arrived in the country in July. The trip would not likely

take him much more than two weeks, and he would arrive early in October.

After setting up the crows, Kelsey would have time before the river froze to go wherever he had planned to spend the winter somewhere upstream. He did not winter at Deering's Point where the natives were Crees, but with "Ye Stone Indians in whose country I remained two years ":

Wherever the winter was passed Kelsey evidently returned to Deering's Point in the spring with the Indians on the way to trade at the Bay and it seems that he remained there awaiting their return. On July 15th he left Deering's Point on the way back inland, and two weeks later reached a company of Stone Indians who gave him a great welcome:

"July ye 30th Now we pitcht again about ten Miles & came to our Indians making a great feast telling yt they were very glad yt I was returned according to my promise for if I should be wanting they should be greatly afraid yt ye Nayhaythaways Indians would murder ym & so made me master of ye feast."

It is clear not only that Kelsey had met these natives before, "our Indians" he calls them, but that they knew him well. He was not given the casual greeting of people whom he had merely seen as he passed along, but the welcome he would receive from men who knew him as a friend. There is not the same intimate relationship seen in Kelsey's dealings with any of the other Indians he met. You cannot know people as Kelsey and these Indians knew each other unless you have lived together. Then, too, the kind of reception he was given would not have been accorded to one whom they knew well but who had been absent for only a short time.

The most feasible explanation is that Kelsey had spent the winter with these Stone Indians. Winter afforded the only chance he had of becoming acquainted with a more or less settled band. Leaving in the spring, he would have been away for over three months, and now he had "returned according to my promise." They were glad to see him for his

sake as well as for their own, because their Nayhaythaway neighbours were threatening to kill them and they knew that Kelsey had influence with the other Indians and could protect them so they welcomed him and made a great feast of which he was made master. When he left next day he was presented with seventeen beaver pelts, which he probably left to be picked up on his return.

A map showing the distribution of the tribes about Kelsey's day places the Nayhaythaways at the Forks and the Stones just to the south. This is exactly the situation indicated in Kelsey's diary, the Nayhaythaways being neighbours of the Stones where Kelsey met the latter. The two tribes were allies but there was more or less friction at times.

The place where Kelsey was welcomed back by his friends lay some twenty miles west of Fort à la Crosse and would be in the present Cozby district. It borders the South Saskatchewan where the river has some deep bends. Kelsey's friends seem to have had a more or less permanent home there; he knew where to find them and went directly to the place. Likely he had followed a trail there. Enquiries failed to reveal any information about an old Indian village, but modern ways of detecting such places may yet find the site of one in the vicinity.

My old mason charge extended into Cozby, and I recall it as steeply rolling, roadless and practically virgin country. I had not been back since those days and returned to find all the land capable of cultivation under crop. I said to my companion that we were near the place where Kelsey had been welcomed back and given a present of beaver skins. The comment was that it was a natural gift there as it had been a fine beaver country. The narrow depressions between the ridges had all been dammed by beaver, and poplar trees afforded food. The old beaver works are constantly being turned up on the lower land.

A few miles from Cozby is the Peonan Creek, which Hind in 1857 described as a rich beaver meadow all the way up. Just to the south lies the Carrot River with another fine beaver valley. When travelling up the Peonan in August, 1772, Cocking was told by the Indians that buffalo

1 See map in *The Indians of Canada* by Dr. Dawson.

wintered there in great numbers, evidence of which he could see on the ground. All things considered, this would be a most attractive wintering country for the Indians, with fuel, food and shelter in the poplar bluffs, and good beaver hunting and the buffalo at hand.

There is an unconfirmed story to the effect that Kelsey spent some time with the Indians, also Stones, at Thunder Hill near the headwaters of the Assiniboine River. Even if he did not winter there, we cannot overlook the possibility that he may have paid a winter visit to other bands in the interests of increased trapping. The Assiniboine was not so far away and one would think that such a visit was not unlikely.

In the present state of our knowledge, the strong indications are that Kelsey's headquarters during the first winter were where his friends welcomed him back the following summer, in the Coxby district on the South Saskatchewan, south of the Saskatchewan Forks. But he would wander a good deal trapping, and a rather wide country including the Peonan Creek and nearby Carrot River valley may be considered as his wintering ground.

If Kelsey spent the first winter here, where did he pass the second winter? It will be recalled that we last saw him in 1691 when the peace talks ended in September, when he was near the Eagle Hills. He would not winter there nor to the west since it was all in Naywatame country, but rather with his Stone Indian companions somewhere to the east. At that time they occupied the land just south of the main Saskatchewan almost to the Forks, and the lower reaches of the South Saskatchewan. The neighbours were their Cree allies.

Then there is the evidence of the cache which Kelsey buried on the Saskatchewan south of Cumberland in the summer of 1691, and which he intended reclaiming when he returned in the spring. Evidently his plan was to come down the river then, which strongly indicates that he meant to winter somewhere upstream. It must have been at some place east of the Eagle Hills and well out of Naywatame country.

Taking every indication into consideration, it seems

likely that Kelsey spent the second winter where we believe he spent the first winter—in the Coxby-Peonan country. His headquarters would probably be an Indian village on or near the South Saskatchewan, the place where he met his friends in the summer of 1691. This location coincides with the opinion of the late Prof. A. S. Morton, that Kelsey spent his winters somewhere to the northeast of Saskatoon.

Into no other district can Kelsey be fitted any better, nor even as well, during the two winters he passed in the country. The two branches of the Saskatchewan were at hand, Indians waited for each other at the Forks in the spring, and from his winter quarters Kelsey could go by canoe all the way back to Hudson Bay.

CHAPTER 20

WERE THE TWO JOURNEYS THE SAME?

KELSEY made two long journeys into the prairies and it looks as though he followed the same course on both trips. The poem and the diary, telling respectively of the two journeys, both show that he left the woods behind and came to the open plains and the buffalo. He then crossed a plain lying between woods, and in both years it was forty-six miles wide. Immediately afterwards he reached ridges with poosis, poplars and beaver. On both journeys he sought remote Indians for the purpose of making peace and encouraging trade and in each case it took him from July to September to reach them.

The two journeys are so similar that for a time I thought Kelsey might be describing the same trip. This, however, is not the case. Though alike the two journeys are distinct. It is often stated that the first journey was preliminary and shorter but there is nothing to support this idea. The routes in both years must have been about the same length, as they took the same time to cover—about two months.

Though Kelsey's two journeys began at the same place and took him to the same country it is not likely that the trails were identical in every respect. With enough food and water the first year the reasonable thing was to canoe all the way up to the Peonian Creek, the Indian waiting place near Fort à la Corne. This is what Cocking did in 1772, and his land journey from there took him southwest up the Peonian Creek, which he does not mention, and past the Birch Hills, which he does mention, and then to the South Saskatchewan.

Old maps show a trail running up the Peonian Creek. West of where Shannonville school once stood I used to follow a trail on the left bank and wondered how it had become so deeply worn with so few settlers in the country. I now think it may have been part of the old trail from the Fort.

This would be the logical land route for Kelsey to

follow on his first journey if he canoed to the mouth of the Peonan. It would cut off many miles to the South Saskatchewan. He would be under no obligation, as on the second journey, to go west here in order that he might visit his old friends and meet the strange Indians on the river north of Penton.

Kelsey's route here for the first journey cannot be proved, but this is what seems probable. In this case he would first see the parkland prairies on the Peonan.

But why should Kelsey have had to make the same journey twice to the same people? The answer is that the first peace he made had been broken by tribal killings. It was imperative that he try again if his mission was not to be a failure, since peace amongst the Indians and an increase in trade that would result therefrom was the reason for which he had been sent inland.

Kelsey tells in the rhyme of the fate that overtook the first peace:

"In September I brought those Natives to a peace
But I had no sooner from those Natives turned my back
Some of the home Indians came upon their track
And for old grudges & their minds to fill
Came up with them Six tents of wch they kil'd "

On September 9th the following year Kelsey tells how he went, "To Invite & In courage ym to a peace once more." The words "once more" seem to imply that he had made a peace with the same people before. That the Indians were the same seems definite from the record of September 12th, 1691, when he asked the Chief of the Naywatames to forget "Ye Nayhaythaways killing six tents of his Countrymen." This is evidently a reference to what had happened to the six tents spoken of in the rhyme of 1690.

The account of the breaking of the first peace pact makes one think that it took place immediately and while Kelsey was still in the vicinity.

"Thus ill news kept secrett was from me
Nor none of those home Indians did I see

Untill that they their murder all had done
And the Chief actor was he yte called ye Son "

They would not have kept a secret from him personally nor would they have needed to stay out of his sight if he had not been in the company. Just after the tribes parted, and when the Naywatames were under a sense of security following speeches, gifts and assurances, and were likely sleeping the Nayhaythaways fell upon them in six tents and slew them all, probably thirty men, women and children.

Kelsey knew this right away, and with the pact broken would realize that he would have to make the same journey on the same mission the following year. His plans were made for him. It was "ill news" and a sore disappointment, but he does not dwell on this. His own feelings are always well under cover. Next spring the Indians carried a message to Governor Gever telling him what had happened, and Kelsey received the reply at Deering's Point in July, confirming the plan he had already made to go back and make a second peace between the Naywatames and his own Indians.

On this journey of 1691 hunting and travelling, Kelsey covered some 235 miles west of the South Saskatchewan, fifty four of them in retracing his steps at the last. If the trip the year before was all outward, as it likely was, and Kelsey kept going west from the place where he turned in 1691, he would meet the Blackfoot tribe west of the Saskatchewan-Alberta border and east of Wainwright, Alberta. Most of the Blackfoot country was to the west.

If this was indeed his route, Henry Kelsey was the first white man to reach the prairies of present day Alberta. While this cannot be proved it remains an interesting and not improbable speculation. Kelsey's meeting with the Blackfeet may well have taken place in Alberta. The most probable alternative would put the meeting place just inside the border in Saskatchewan. It was at this powwow that the first agreement between a white man and the Indians of the West was made. It was designed to end bloodshed, make brothers of all the warring tribes, and bring peace to the plains.

Though it ended in failure, like the pact of the follow

ing year, it was a great and significant event, the result of much sacrifice and of high hopes and dauntless courage. Marking the end of a dangerous journey covering three months, and taking Kelsey all the way from Hudson Bay to the heart of the prairies, it is a proud example of enterprising youth and gallant adventure to stand at the beginning of any country's history.

Kelsey's mission and travels are linked together and may be explained in two words: Peace and Pelts. Cense from all wars; do not use our guns to kill one another but to get food. Keep hunting for furs and come and trade them for our goods. "Peace and Pelts" was the reason for Kelsey's long journeys, and explains everything he did during his two years in the country.

Kelsey's message in modern terms, Peace and Trade, is as sound now as it was in his own day. Let us be friends, stop all wars, trust one another and trade freely. This is an excellent prescription for the world and its ills today. Kelsey was no quack, the cure may be as simple as that.

CHAPTER 22

THE INLAND COUNTRY OF GOOD REPORT

"For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land
A land of wheat and barley
A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness.
—Deut. 8: 7-9

NOW that we know the story of Kelsey's prairie journeys, there are some things that can better be understood about the country, about the conditions he found and about Kelsey himself.

Instead of blazing new trails into the wilderness by travelling alone, explorers had the company of natives who took them over well established tribal routes. Hence, Kelsey would always know from the Indians what lay ahead and little would come as a surprise to him. Apart from the natives, most early discoverers of the West had the company of other white men or half-breeds and could hardly be said to be cut off from their own kind. But Kelsey had no such companionship and was all alone with the Indians during his long absence and distant travels.

For some years the young lad had heard the Stone Indians who came to trade on the Bay speak well of their country, and he knew a good deal about the prairies and had a fine name for them before ever he went there:

"To live amongst ye Natives of this place
If God permits me for one two years space
The Inland Country of Good report hath been
By Indians but by English yet not seen."

The Inland Country of Good Report is the first name the prairies ever received. It was the land of the buffalo where food was abundant and where the hunt went on unhampered, as compared with the north with its woods and waters where game was small and scarce. Kelsey was sent inland in the interests of the fur trade, and his masters would have been none too well pleased to have had a glow-

ing account of the plains as a land that could be cultivated. Over 100 years later the Company was strenuously opposing the first farming settlement in the country, holding that it was fit only for buffalo and beaver.

An illustration of this attitude is the manner in which the Company presented Kelsey's account of his discovery of the prairies north of Saskatoon on August 12th, 1691. As submitted to the Parliamentary Committee in 1743 the entry read:

"This day we pitcht again and about Noon the Ground beginning to grow heathy and barren in fields of about half a Mile over . . ."

Omitted was the last part of Kelsey's description ". . . Just as if they had been Artificially planted with fine groves of poplo growing round."

The Company did not mind the country being called barren, by which Kelsey meant bare, but he went on to compare it to a hand tended estate such as might be seen in England, with everything trim, well-kept and pleasing to the eye—an alluring prospect. The description might have led people to think well of the land as a place for settlement. That was dangerous and it had to be deleted.

Kelsey was the first white man in this country to see the muskox and the buffalo. He called them both buffalo, the name by which the prairie bison is now known. He was not likely the first to call the latter a buffalo and one wonders how he came to use the name, since it was not the Indian name for the monarch of the plains. Kelsey may have seen pictures and descriptions of our buffalo which had already been known on the Mississippi. Or, he could have read about the buffalo of the East with humped-up shoulders, and noted the resemblance.

Kelsey had seen the buffalo and had used that name for them during his first visit to the prairies in 1690, and they would be no surprise to him when he saw them again the following summer. Even before he knew the prairies, he must have heard all about the buffalo and known what they

looked like and seen their pelts. The tents the Indians carried along were of buffalo hides and were a heavy load on the trail. It would be such tents Kelsey's party used from Deering's Point and before the prairies were reached.

The diary for August 20th, when west of Saskatoon, tells of "a great sort of a Bear wch is bigger then any white Bear & is Nether White nor Black But silver hair'd like our English Rabbit."

The bear was the grizzly, common at that time in the wooded parts of the plains, though Kelsey did not know its name. He would be thinking of the polar bear, which he would know well on Hudson Bay, when he states that this bear was bigger than any white bear. It was not black, an allusion no doubt to the common black bear of the woods, which he would also know. But the grizzly would be new to him, and he aptly describes it as being "silver hair'd."

The grizzly is not mentioned by Vérendrye though it was found over a wide area. Unlike most bears, it did not climb trees, unless when a cub, owing to its blunt claws and great weight, which would have been too much for any prairie tree. It has been said that Lewis and Clarke, when crossing the continent as late as 1805, were the first to encounter and describe the grizzly, but Kelsey had described it and even fought with it 115 years earlier.

The grizzly was the terror of the plains, its great strength and ferocity making it an object of awe. The first year Kelsey was on the plains he tried to get a pelt but the Indians prevented him, saying it was a god and they would all starve as a punishment. After his day the grizzly became well known on Hudson Bay, no doubt because pelts had been brought down from the interior.

The only large animal Kelsey mentions in the woods is the moose. When he speaks of beasts he probably means elk or a smaller kind of deer. The squirrel he shot on the Saskatchewan would be the red squirrel and not the ground squirrel of the south. If they had not been starving Kelsey would not have wasted precious ammunition on small birds and beasts. Once he reached the plains and the buffalo

there is no further mention of small game. He does not speak of wolves, coyotes, badgers or gophers.

Of the birds mentioned, the "wood partridge" would not be a partridge but the ruffed grouse of the northern woods. Kelsey would also know the sharp tailed grouse of the parklands. The bird known to us as the prairie chicken is a newcomer and was not on the prairies in his day. His swans would be trumpeter swans, now almost extinct, while the pigeons he shot at Nipawin would be the passenger pigeons, once present in extraordinary numbers, but now extinct.

Kelsey makes no mention of singing birds nor of the prairie flowers which would often bloom in profusion at his feet. He would see the future floral emblems of the three prairie provinces: Manitoba's anemone, Saskatchewan's tiger lily and Alberta's wild rose, abundant still with the exception of Saskatchewan's flower, which has almost disappeared, probably because it is large and showy and has been continually picked.

The diary has few notes and nothing from day to day on the prairie weather. During his two month's journey in 1891 it rained three times: once east of Nipawin, and again, clearing at noon, just before he reached the South Saskatchewan. There was an all day rain in August when he was on the open plains north of Saskatoon. These seem to have been general rains, and there is nothing about showers or thunderstorms, of which there must have been some.

There is no mention of sudden winds such as cause people to rise in the night and make everything secure. Kelsey must have known such storms—when the tent was blown down and he hurriedly retrieved his belongings being scattered across the prairies. Nor is there anything about sweltering breathless days when travel would be difficult in the noontide sun. In the poem he merely alludes to having suffered from the cold, but the long sub zero spells must have been snow torture in the crude Indian shelters. North of Churchill he had been troubled by mosquitoes but he does not speak of them on the plains, likely because he would be able to have a smudge there.

It is a marvel that under the circumstances Kelsey was

able to keep his prairie diary so faithfully with an entry written each evening. Even when he was fatigued and had made up to thirty miles a day he would sit down and write up to eighteen lines telling the day's story. And he was always definite as to how and when a thing took place "at 11 o'clock," "in the evening," "at 2 o'clock five Indian strangers came."

Our wonder is also excited when we remember that the diary, written in summer, survived the hazards of the long winter under the most primitive of conditions, in and out of the tents, not conducive to the preservation of a fragile paper page. Perhaps we have no longer account of the first prairie journey simply because the diary recording it did not survive.

A page of the 1690 poem is reproduced in the Kelsey Papers and may be in Kelsey's own handwriting, though we cannot be sure of this. With a little patience it is quite readable. The ink has faded very little. The name, Henry Kelsey, in larger script, is easily legible.

The 1691 diary of the Kelsey Papers could be the original which Kelsey kept on the prairies, but it is more likely to be a copy. It is, however, a genuine Kelsey diary. As the first literary production in the West as well as the personal story of his western travels, written on the prairie trail from day to day and not composed from memory later, the diary is a very precious document, and should rank for us with the most famous of our Canadian historical manuscripts. But for the fact that Kelsey had a literary turn of mind and made copies of his journals we would not know today by whom the prairies were discovered.

Kelsey began all his journeys by acknowledging his dependence upon God. He left Hudson Bay on the journey that discovered the prairies, setting forth " . . . as plainly may appear through Gods assistance for to understand the natives language & to see their land." The story of his second excursion to the plains begins thus "A . . . Journey undertaken by Henry Kelsey through Gods assistance . . ." He wrote thus at The Pas and it is the first recorded use of the name of the Christian God in the Canadian West.

Our history on the prairies began as the Bible itself begins. With both it is, "In the beginning God." God was in our story and acknowledged by name when a white man set out to discover the country and before ever he set foot on its soil. Before anything or any one of us here, it was "God first." The effect of this from Kelsey's day has never been lost upon us. We are fond of saying that we have never had a Godless, lawless West.

After his return from the prairies Kelsey was granted some financial reward. We do not know how much, the amount being left to the discretion of Governor Geyer. In this connection the following quotation is of interest. "On the 22nd Nov. (1698), John Sweetapple the goldsmith, who was acting as the Company's banker, was directed to pay Kelsey on account of wages thirty pounds, and on Feby 23rd, 1694, the balance of fifty six pounds, seven teen shilings and nine pence." At that time Kelsey was in England on his first leave home.

It is to be noted that these payments were made nearly two years after Kelsey's return from the prairies, and that the eighty-six pounds may have included his wages during that period, as well as during his two years absence in the interior, and also his bonus for the journey.

An approximate guess at Kelsey's salary when he was in the interior would be twenty pounds a year with some reward added. The total expense involved in the discovery of the prairies might be put down roughly at about fifty or sixty pounds. It is difficult assessing its equivalent in modern currency but it would not be more than a few hundred dollars.

Surely no country was ever discovered at less cost or paid more handsomely at the first venture. Kelsey had no bodyguard, excepting on occasion the natives, and no equipment or trade goods and carried only a few presents for the chiefs. Likely the meagre expense of the one man expedition that discovered the prairies was more than offset by the increase in trade sent down by Kelsey the first spring. The second spring the Governor noted that Kelsey had returned

"with a good fleet of canoes." Kelsey himself wrote that his journey "did increase ye trade considerably as may be perceived from their acct books."

Not all of the people on the plains have done well for themselves materially, and at the head of the list of the "unrewarded" would be the first white man there—Henry Kelsey. He did manage to escape with his life, but only narrowly at times. Yet in pressing his discoveries far afield, and in refusing to countenance war amongst the tribes, Kelsey achieved, on behalf of later generations of pioneers, an unqualified success.

Kelsey did not return to the prairies, nor was anyone else sent inland until more than sixty years had elapsed. For a long time after Kelsey's journey another mission to the prairies would have been impossible. For almost twenty years the Company was confined to James Bay, having lost the northern posts to the French. The tragic loss of life that accompanied the fall of Fort York, and the continual changing of the staff, further emphasized the break with the past.

Kelsey's journey and the information he brought back about the interior would have been of more value if the Company had continued to operate from Fort York. If he had been asked to write a detailed account of the country and prepare a map of his travels, the information would have been of value later. But his superiors were satisfied that he had been inland and that trade had increased. When the Company finally returned to the north, though Kelsey himself was present, it had almost to begin life anew.

Over fifty years later, Governor Isham and those associated with him at Fort York had only a vague idea of the interior, and seem scarcely to have been aware of the Saskatchewan River. They were more obsessed with the Western Sea, which no one had reached, than with anything that lay closer at hand.

Today Kelsey's prairie trail still runs across a great lone land, directly touching only a few hamlets. Even the farm homes are widely scattered, many of them completely isolated in winter. In summer, great green fields of grain reach out in every direction with hardly a sign of life. At

times, men on rubber-tired machines, suddenly appearing from nowhere, race over the growing grain and in a few hours do the work that required many men for days only a few years ago.

But Kelsey's "poplo" lands and "ye barren ground" are more than ever The Inland Country of Good Report—one of the great bread baskets of the world growing vast quantities of grain, mostly high grade hard spring wheat.

There must have been poetry in the soul of Henry Kelsey when, at the age of 20, coining it himself, he gave the prairies their first and finest name—The Inland Country of Good Report. And he used capital letters to emphasize it. The name has a strong Elizabethan flavour, reminiscent of the golden age of gallantry and adventure in far-off lands and seas. It suggests the Pilgrims Progress more than beaver pelts and profits.

Kelsey was back in England when he wrote the poem, and in retrospect the prairies were still The Inland Country of Good Report. In giving the prairies this fine name, he gave them a good start. And, by his courage and determination, he left us with a splendid example.

We, in turn, might well hail Henry Kelsey as the Boy who was the Father of the Prairie West, and an Explorer of Good Report.

CHAPTER 23

KELSEY'S INDIANS

*"Hungry days and sudden danger,
Yet the influence did not fail,
Friendship and the land surviving
All the threats of war and trail."*

IT has been computed that when white men first arrived in North America, not more than a million and a quarter Indians occupied the continent, owning nearly six million square miles of land. Not more than a quarter of a million of them lived in what is now Canada, only a very small part being found on the western plains. The situation would be much the same in Kelsey's day since the majority of the tribes, untouched as yet by outside influences, were still living after their ancient manner.

The great Algonquin tribe roamed the evergreen woods across Canada from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains. Living in a land of many waters they were canoe-travelling Indians and adept at making and handling the light birch bark craft in which they made amazingly long journeys. The Crees, who occupied the country around Hudson Bay, belonged to the Algonquin family and would be the first Indians Kelsey met.

Cree is not an Indian name and it was not known in Kelsey's day. He frequently mentions the Nayhaythaways, and when he does so he means the present day Crees. The name Nayhaythaway means the people who spoke the tongue they used and distinguished them from tribes who spoke other languages. Kelsey's spelling of the name indicates that he spoke northern Cree.

The Stone Indians are also prominent in Kelsey's diary. They were Assiniboines from the plains. The name came from Assinac, meaning stone, and was derived from their method of cooking meat. In the absence of metal containers, they would bury a birch basket in the ground and partly filling it with water would be able to raise the temperature sufficiently to cook meat by dropping in hot stones.

The Stones were of the Sioux family. Having quarrelled with their own tribe they began a slow migration through the Lake of the Woods country and out into the Canadian prairies. Here they met the Crees, like themselves pushing out of the woods into the open plains. Despite the fact that they spoke different languages, the two tribes were drawn to each other by a common desire to possess the buffalo country, then occupied by the Blackfeet, since neither was strong enough to gain it alone.

The pact the two tribes made worked well on the whole, and before their united efforts the Blackfeet began a slow retreat to the west. In Kelsey's day the Nayhaythaways held the wooded north country as far south as the open plains, including Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, and were just south of the main Saskatchewan east of the Forks. The Stones held the prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan as far west as the Eagle Hills on the North Saskatchewan, where they met the Blackfeet.

It was with Stone Indians that Kelsey made his memorable journey from Hudson Bay to discover the prairies, and with them he lived during his two years in the country. When he speaks of "our Indians," as he frequently does, he means the Stones with whom he was travelling and living. The "home Indians" are often spoken of. They were Nayhaythaways, who were found around Fort York, Kelsey's home base.

Kelsey speaks of only three tribes—Nayhaythaways, Stones and Naywatames. They are all mentioned in a single entry in the diary on August 4th, and are there seen to be different.

"Having some strangers come to our tents from some Stone Indians . . . their news was yt ye Nayhaythaways had lost 3 of their women wch ye Naywatame poets had killed "

The name of Kelsey's third Indians, Naywatame, the tribe he sought, affords no clue to their identity. Fortunately he tells us a good deal about these Indians. They did not use canoes, spoke a language not used by the other tribes, were

the enemy of these Indians, did not trade at the Bay, and lived beyond the tribes Kelsey knew

We have already taken it for granted that the Blackfeet were the Naywatames. In every respect Kelsey's descriptions links the two as being one and the same. Apart from everything else it can be shown that the Blackfeet lived where Kelsey found the Naywatames. Kelsey's connection with them was slight, a few days at the end of two long journeys.

Later records on the Bay do not mention the Naywatames but speak of the remote Indians as the Archithinues, a name meaning strange Indians. It was applied to the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy. No doubt Archithinue and Naywatame referred to the same Indians. They still did not trade at the Bay and little was known about them even long after Kelsey's day.

Kelsey speaks of "Mountain poets" and "Naywatame poets." We learn from Canon Ahenakew that POET, PWAT, POT and other forms of the word mean, Sioux. When used as a suffix to a tribal name, POET denotes that the people belonged to the Sioux family. It is proper to speak of Assinapoets, Stone Sioux, since the Assiniboines were Sioux. We are told that the b in Assiniboine ought to be p. As POINE, the suffix resembles Kelsey's POET more closely than BOINE.

Kelsey used the word POET with the name of other Indians who were not Sioux, like the Naywatames. This is understandable since nobody had been in the country and knew who the tribes were. It was easy to be wrong in a matter like this.

Kelsey met the "Mountain poets" under their chief, Washa, just east of the Eagle Hills. They may have taken their name from these hills, hills on the plains being often referred to as mountains. Or, as has been suggested, they may have been Stoney Indians from near Calgary, where such Indians are found today. Probably their home was nearer at hand, but wherever they came from they were

Stones and of Sioux stock, and could properly be referred to as POETS.

Though the Naywatames were being urged to bring their furs to Hudson Bay, a very long journey, it is difficult to see how they could have done this in any numbers since they had no canoes and would have been passengers among the enemy Stones or Nayharthaways while traveling through their country. That would have been taking a long chance. With the buffalo and enough food the Naywatames considered themselves well off and had no need to go to the Bay like the Indians who ate beaver and muskrat. One can imagine the Naywatames who were despised because they did not use canoes, feeling that their manhood was being degraded by having to sit day after day on a piece of floating bark, hunched up like a dog.

Life amongst the Indians has been pictured as an ideal existence, untroubled by the ills that civilization has brought. A state of nature has always attracted people but there is nothing to justify it in the life Kelcey found amongst the Indians. For ages they had been dogged by hunger, even where food was most plentiful, and they lived in constant dread of their enemies. Life was more fear ridden than care free.

Even though there were few people in the great lone land they did not live in peace. During his two years on the plains Kelcey recorded several massacres which can rightly be called such. Some of them involved scores of natives cruelly done to death not far from where he was. Kelcey's report to Governor Geyer at the end of the first year told how the Indians in the interior were continually at war. A new weapon like a gun reduced the hunger hazard, but it was important in the first place because of the advantage it gave them over their enemies. In the end the Blackfeet suffered because, not trading with the white man, they lacked the thunder and lightning that killed men.

In early New France, Champlain considered that he could best serve the interests of the colony and consolidate the friendship and trade of the Indians by taking sides with them against their ancient foes. With other Frenchmen he joined a war party against the Iroquois, who had never

before seen white men or guns. The first blast of the firearms at close range laid three chiefs low. A pattern had been set. Led by Champlain, other war parties sought out the Iroquois. Feuds and bitterness came to no end. The settlements of New France were continually attacked. Finally, the Montagnais were reduced to a feeble remnant, and the Huron tribe was wiped out.

A similar story of bitterness and bloodshed would have been told on the prairies if Henry Kelsey, under the pressure to which he was continually subjected, had ever agreed to the use of firearms in the tribal wars or had in any way taken sides. The Indians fought one another, but Kelsey, though living with one tribe somehow managed to remain the friend of them all. Behind him on the prairies he left a legacy of goodwill that was reaped by all who followed him. Henday, the next white man there, spent a quiet winter with the Blackfeet, one of the most savage of the tribes, with whom Kelsey had had dealings.

The policy of the Company since its inception had been to inspire confidence by remaining to do business wherever it established a post in the wilds, and by being just and fair to the natives. Kelsey was faithful to the principles of the Company, and more, they represented his own personal attitude to the tribes wherever he met them. Firm, fearless and just, he might well be remembered in his own words: "I came to kill no Indian but to make peace with as many as I could."

The food supply was always a problem. The diary shows that Kelsey and his Indians were entirely dependent on the chase as they travelled. He does not mention pemmican, although the trip to the Bay would have been almost impossible without it, and it would have had to be augmented by such fish and game as could be procured.

There is no allusion to epidemics in the diary. Such scourges as tuberculosis and smallpox, against which the tribes had no immunity and which almost wiped them out later, had not yet appeared. In Kelsey's day the Indians of the prairies seem to have been strong and healthy.

Today, the Blackfeet live in Alberta. The Nayhaytha-

ways who live in the woods of the north are called Wood or Swampy Crees, while those who live in the south are known as Plains Crees. They occupy the prairies of Saskatchewan, held in Kelsey's day by their allies, the Stones. The latter, the once mighty Assiniboines with whom Kelsey crossed the plains, are a dwindling remnant, and are fast following the buffalo into the land of vanished life.

We are indebted to Kelsey for the first account, separate from the journal, of the manners and customs of the Crees and Assiniboines of the plains. Regarding the position of women he writes:

"Now as for a woman they do not so much mind here for they reckon she is a Sled dog when she is living & when she dyes they think she dyes to Eternity but a man they think departs into another world and lives again."

It was a hard existence for all, but particularly for the women. Considered somewhat less than human, they were drudges and burden bearers all their days.

Magic and conjuring were common among the natives. Kelsey tells how the men would gather in a darkened tent and one would pretend to have a familiar spirit and be able to answer any question. He would know which way the buffalo had gone, where other Indians were to be found, and what was going on at the Fort hundreds of miles away. The Indians always believed, but Kelsey said he had "found it often to be lies."

A medicine man would pretend that something he had in his mouth had been sucked from the body of a sick man. One Indian knew what the heavens are made of—"he had been there and seen them." Another had been so near the sun when it went down that he could put out his hand and touch it. Everything passed for truth when a man with a familiar spirit spoke, "although he hath told never so many lies before."

Every beast they killed had some part for men only, and a woman must on no account taste of such meat. If she did, and fell sick even a year or two later and died, "they will not stick to say it was yt killed her."

Kelsey saw nothing of worth in their crude beliefs and practices but he never laughed at them. There is no instance of his having taken advantage of their ignorance or of having been anything less than just to his companions.

No doubt this is why, single-handed and alone and entirely in their power, Kelsey was able to live with the Indians and share their life for two long years. No hand was ever lifted against him, nor was there any ill-feeling on either side. Mutual confidence was complete. They recognised each other as equals.

CHAPTER 24

AFTER THE PRAIRIES, AND JAMES BAY

"It was very great and noble
Said the model-eyed historian then,
But one brave deed makes no hero.
Tell me what he since hath been."

AFTER being absent for two years discovering the prairies, Kelsey was back at Fort York in June, 1692. According to his own record he sailed for England that fall Kenney, however, holds that the date is wrong, and that Kelsey returned with Governor Geyer in 1693. This may have been so, but whenever he did arrive home he had the full story of his explorations, and a number of the Directors must have heard it from the man himself and must also have read his diary.

But the Company was not telling anything. It regarded itself as a private concern and what it happened to discover was strictly its own business. Besides, the envy of many already, it was in no mood to risk more opposition by telling of a vast new fur region that made its prospects appear even brighter than before.

So the amazing story of the discovery of the prairies of Canada was treated as a piece of private information, carefully kept from the public, and it seems even from the Government itself.

Literally scores of explorers have returned to London from all the lands and seas, to be recognized for the discoveries they had made and to have their names honoured and remembered. Some of those who followed Kelsey in the Canadian West achieved fame, knightly honour and riches. But for Henry Kelsey, at twenty two the youngest of them all, with as great a discovery to his credit as any of them could boast, there were no heartshaking welcomes, no banquets and no banners. It mattered nothing to anyone that he had travelled in a vast, virgin land that was yet to

i The Career of Henry Kelsey. James F. Kenney, Royal Society of Canada, Vol. 23, page 48.

give a new home and new hope to millions of men and women in the old world.

It was Kelsey's first leave home but we know little or nothing about his stay there. It is certain that he arrived back at Fort York in August, 1694. It was just ten years since he had landed as a young apprentice and he was now twenty four, a fully experienced and trusted servant of the Company.

No doubt Kelsey was looking forward to another long spell of service and to new personal triumphs. But this time the omens were against the Company and tragic years lay ahead for himself. The triumph of his prairie journey was completely overshadowed, and indeed forgotten, in the immediate problems of their survival as an organization and as individuals.

The old struggle between the French and English had flared up anew and swept into Hudson Bay. On September 14th the Fort had the disquieting news of the arrival of two French ships under D' Iberville. A man who climbed the flag pole could see them. French forces were seen to land and soon were all around the establishment. The men got ready for defence. For three weeks intermittent firing went on and sharpshooters from the tower killed a brother of D' Iberville. The river was now freezing and an all night storm brought a heavy fall of snow. Winter had come in earnest. Meanwhile, the French had dragged their heavy guns into position and trained them on the Fort.

One morning a Frenchman and a "Mohawk Indian" appeared with a flag of truce, and demanded the surrender of Fort York under pain of its being blasted and no quarter given the defenders. The Governor was denied longer time to consider his answer.

On October 4th The Rev. Mr. Matthew, Chaplain at the Fort, and Henry Kelsey, under a white flag carried a message to D' Iberville. But the French commander demanded that the Fort be surrendered by 4 o'clock that afternoon. The Governor considered that he was in no position to resist.

and Fort York fell to the enemy. With the rest Kelsey found himself a prisoner in their hands.

It was too late in the season for the French to sail for home with their English captives, and these spent a distressing winter. Only four officers were given quarters at the Fort. The rest were driven to the winter woods and those who returned were made slaves. Kelsey gives no account of how the winter was spent but it was a cruel experience for everyone.

In an affidavit made in London in 1696, Isaac Woods, the surgeon, testified that Kelsey was one of the men driven to the bush and that he suffered extreme hunger. One can hardly imagine the conditions. What clothing and bedding would they have? How would they provide log shelters with the bitter winter fully upon them? One wonders what tools they had, whether they had nails, and how they would make a fireplace and chimney. To cut, carry and keep a supply of firewood to feed the hungry fires must have taxed their energies to the limit.

Having to live off the hunt in the woods where game was scarce and sometimes non-existent would be a precarious existence, even if one were fully prepared for such a life. Freezing and starving, men fell ill and died as the winter dragged its slow course. Small wonder that only twenty-five out of fifty-three men, all young and able-bodied when the ordeal began, were alive when the geese returned in the spring. The hardship must have broken many of those who survived, and it is a tribute to Kelsey's mental balance and physical stamina that the experience does not seem to have permanently affected him.

No English ship came the following summer, and Kelsey and other survivors were carried off to France, a ragged and emaciated band. After several months in prison they were ransomed by the Company, and Kelsey found himself back in London.

In August of the following year, 1696, two English ships came to Port Nelson and the French commander surrendered on demand. Kelsey had been eager to get back into the service and was on the Bay again with the relieving

force. Late that summer two French ships arrived, but finding the English in possession, turned and fled. One of them was caught in the ice and sank. In the fall the English ships took back an immense quantity of furs. Kelsey remained on the Bay with the occupying force.

During the bombardment by D' Iberville in 1694, Kelsey had shown great skill and courage, and a report to this effect reached London. As a result the Company made him a grant of forty pounds, a considerable sum in those days. When the Fort was recaptured in 1698, Kelsey's conduct again attracted attention and the Company acknowledged this to him. "We thanke God for the success you had last year in Retaking York ffort." The Fort was soon in French hands again, but in defeat and victory alike Kelsey had been singled out for distinction.

The French answered the new challenge on the Bay by sending out a strong fleet, five ships of war under D' Iberville. A weaker force came from England, three ships including H. M. S. HAMPSHIRE. Manoeuvring beyond the shoals off the mouth of the Nelson the two fleets came to grips. At first the French had the worst of the battle but the tide soon turned in their favour and D' Iberville was able to rake the HAMPSHIRE. The story has been that, owing to a sudden shift of the wind as she turned, the damaged HAMPSHIRE keeled over and sank. Not a single man of her crew of 280 was saved. The French said she was crushed by gunfire and that the wind had nothing to do with the sinking.

The battle must have been a memorable experience for Kelsey. He would hear the cannonading as it rolled in from the sea, with the smoke and flashes visible in the sky, and he may have watched the entire fight from the shore and have seen the crippled HAMPSHIRE as she veered and went down. It was an ominous sign for them all and they knew what next to expect at the Fort.

Having moved into the estuary, the French fired four shells at the Fort and then sent a party with a flag of truce to demand its surrender. Being denied, they resumed firing. The Governor promised the men one year's pay if they

would defend and hold the Fort, but some said they would not sell their lives for a little money

Taking into account "the ill tidings of our own ships," the Governor agreed to the surrender and on September 3rd they marched out and the French took over. For the second time Kelsey found himself a prisoner of war and Fort York became Fort Bourbon. This was in the fall of 1697, and The Company and Kelsey were not to see the Fort again until seventeen years had passed.

That fall the French returned home and took Kelsey with them. He seems to have lingered in French prisons for months before being ransomed. There is no diary covering the months after the surrender of the Fort, but he calls his release in the spring "the end of a Tedious winter and Tragical Journey by me Henry Kelsey

Once more it did not take Kelsey long to get back into the service. The Company still held the southern part of Hudson Bay, James Bay and he sailed for Albany there in June 1698, as mate on the DEERING frigate. He kept a log on the voyage but we have no information about the winter that followed.

For some time Kelsey was Chief Trader at Eastmain and was also captain of the frigate KNIGHT sailing up the coast to the pools in summer. He ruefully notes that he is being paid fifty pounds for the two jobs that formerly brought forty pounds each. He was none too happy about it and wrote hoping "you will be please to consider my supplying of 2 mens place to ad ten pound to my salary as a gratitude if I do well & do believe ye want of a Continual settlement is ye loss of yt trade." No doubt more money would have given him more heart for his work but hard times had come, and Kelsey was a reliable and efficient man even when economy was the rule.

On James Bay the Company was completely cut off from the Assiniboine Indians of the prairies who had traded at York Fort and Port Nelson. It is doubtful if Kelsey ever again saw any of the Indians with whom he had travelled when he made his discovery. He was in England when they came to trade during the next two years. It has been said that the long journey involved so much hardship that few of them ever came twice. The only chance Kelsey would have had of meeting any of his old friends would have been

when they came to trade in June, 1697, before the French finally took over. But that was five years after his return from the interior.

No great river system like the Saskatchewan - Nelson drained into James Bay. Though there were many streams, none of them led to a new country - but only deeper into the evergreen wilds. A journey might have encouraged the natives to trap and trade more diligently, but would not have found a tribe that did not already trade with the white men. Kelsey speaks of his efforts to increase trade with the Ottawas and other Indians in what is now Quebec and Ontario. There are records to show that he wanted to journey inland but the Directors thought the time inopportune. Most of his travelling at this period was done in summer sailing up and down the Bay and trading as he could.

During his first five years on James Bay, Kelsey wintered at Albany and likely also at Eastmain. Returning to England in 1703, he does not seem to have come out again until 1706. However, as mate or captain of a ship he may have made the voyage out and in during the summers of 1704 and 1705. In 1706 he came out to James Bay as mate on the frigate *PERRY* and remained for six years. Very little information is available for this period, but we know that he was at both Albany and Eastmain and that he continued to sail ships and trade in summer.

The years when the Company was confined to James Bay were trying to all. The French held the larger trading centres in the north and continually menaced those on James Bay. To the south the French on the St. Lawrence competed with the English for the harvest of furs and at times raided and burned their posts. It speaks well for the courage and faith of the Company and its men that they carried on during this difficult period.

The time Kelsey spent on James Bay had seen him holding positions of trust, and with a change in the Company's fortunes he was ready to take a wider part in its activities. On August 1st, 1712, he sailed from Albany for England, and was there when the long conflict between the French and English came to a close. When he returned, it was to Fort York, and he does not seem to have been on James Bay again.

CHAPTER 25

KELSEY AS STUDENT AND TEACHER

"Gladly study by 'learning and gladly teach'

- Chaucer

THE years that followed Kelsey's discovery of the prairies dealt him some staggering blows, with no time to recover from one until another fell. But defeat and disaster failed to embitter him. He had the personal resources of courage and faith to adjust himself to the changes, violent though they were, and an eager interest in life and hope in the future carried him through dark periods when there was no immediate prospect of a change.

Thus, when their fortunes were at a low ebb during the long period on James Bay, when life was neither comfortable nor secure and the French continued to threaten them from the north and by raids from the St. Lawrence, Kelsey not only continued his own studies but also held classes for the instruction of others. He had written to London about teaching the men languages and literature, a project that received the blessing of his Directors:

"You doe well to Educate the men in Literature but especially in the language that in time wee may send them to travel if wee see it convenient. As for discoveries of mines etc it is noe time to thinke upon them now. In times of Peace something may be done. We have sent you your dictionary Printed that you may better Instruct the young Ladde with you in ye Indian Language " 1

At Moose Factory in the time of Governor Stanton, a rough and even brutal martinet, only six men out of thirty six could read. There was no clergyman nor was any Divine Service held. The men spent their time eating, sleeping and frequently quarrelling. It is likely that Kelsey's fellow servants were also illiterate and that he may have had to teach most of them the simple three R's.

What branch of literature Kelsey would be studying

with the men who could read we do not know, but he might have been introducing them to the reading of good books. The libraries of the Company's posts have always been well stocked with sound reading matter, and Kelsey may have been passing on his taste for books with an educational value. In any case the Directors thought that he did well "To Educate the men in Literature."

But they were particularly anxious that the apprentices be instructed in the native tongues since, like Kelsey, they might be sent inland. For this purpose a dictionary of Indian words and phrases that Kelsey had compiled and sent home had been ordered printed and was sent out to him. The letter from the Directors was thus an endorsement of educational work Kelsey was already doing, rather than permission to start something new. His classes had likely been going on for some winters, and the dictionary must have taken many years to prepare.

Kelsey had reduced the Cree tongue to writing, and most likely also the language of the Assiniboines, which would have to be understood by any one sent to the prairies. This must have been the first time that such a thing had been done with the speech of the western tribes. Out of his own primer Kelsey was teaching the men the languages spoken by the natives.

Kelsey's "dixionary Printed" may have been about the earliest text book compiled and used in Canada. It was certainly the first such book west of the St. Lawrence, and the forerunner of the countless text books on innumerable subjects used in the schools and colleges of today. If a copy of the "dixionary" is ever found in the Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company it will be a priceless treasure. It would not only be the first text book, but also, with the diary the first literary production west of the St. Lawrence. The material for the book must have been gathered wherever Kelsey had contact with the natives, including those he met during his two years on the prairies.

It is likely that Kelsey also taught the elements of other subjects he knew, such as navigation. He held his certificate, as mate and captain, and must have taken his examinations in London when he was on leave. In 1696 and again in 1698,

when his age was twenty-six and twenty eight years respectively, Kelsey kept a log for the entire voyage from England, taking note each day of wind and weather, mileage, latitude, longitude and variations. It is a record beyond the understanding of the ordinary reader.

When on the prairies Kelsey had travelled without a compass and would have difficulty knowing his direction on dull days and at other times. He would always be sure of his general direction but would be unable to tell the daily variations. But Kelsey's sea experience had made him conscious of the compass and he would be able to explain its use to the men. He would also have a seaman's knowledge of the stars, and would be able to tell the apprentices how to find their way and know their position, invaluable information for men who might be called upon to travel in the wilderness.

And Kelsey, both in and out of the classes, must often have told of his journey into the interior, of the far away river that led him to the treeless plains—a new kind of country, and of the buffalo herds that roamed there. He would speak about the remote tribe he had found that did not trade at the Bay. If modesty did not forbid him too much he would tell something of the hardships he had endured and the dangers he had escaped. But the story would be told in such a way that it was more of a challenge than a deterrent to adventure.

The building in which Kelsey taught his classes would be a log hut. It would be heated by an open fireplace, probably like the chimney made of brick brought out from England. It would be none too comfortable. Classes would be held in the winter evenings, and the room would be lighted by a dimly burning lamp or by candles. There would be some kind of board to show the work, and the "young Lads" he was to "Instruct" and "Educate" would be seated around. Kelsey would explain the lesson, answer questions and examine the work. Outside trees would be cracking in the sub Arctic cold and Northern Lights would often sweep the sky.

Kelsey was mainly self-taught, and there is something typically western in this. Thousands of young people have

had to study alone on the thinly settled plains. Because of distance or for other reasons many have still to depend on home study. Others who had been deprived of earlier opportunities or have had to leave school take up their studies again in later years. They may not know that the lad who discovered the country did the same thing, likely under even more difficult conditions.

Kelsey had been struck by the possibility that mineral wealth might be found in the rock bound country, the Precambrian Shield to us. He had probably acquired some rudimentary knowledge of rocks, and he asked the Directors for permission to make a trip prospecting for minerals. He must surely have been the first to suspect the presence of riches in the rough unpromising outcroppings along the Shield and to have had plans to prospect there.

The Directors had encouraged Kelsey's educational programme, but they frowned on his idea of looking for mines when they had a French war on their hands and had lost most of the territory they claimed. "As for discoveries of mines etc it is not time to think upon them now in times of Peace Something may be done."

It seems that Kelsey had planned to look for more than minerals. It was a search for "mines etc" that was discouraged. What the "etc" indicates we do not know, but Kelsey may have had a roving commission in mind so that he could explore the country far and near for any resources that could be shipped to England or used locally. If there was any chance to do this he evidently thought the time opportune.

A certain facility in metre is evident in the 1690 rhyme, though Kelsey would probably make no claim for it as poetry, worked over and polished. It would be dashed off much as we would write a letter. The rhyme makes Kelsey the first of our western poets. Our earliest history on the prairies has the distinction of being told in poetry, like the early history of some of the classical lands of the Mediterranean.

The diary has been criticized for faulty composition and loose grammar. There is a lack of punctuation, an indis-

criminate use of capitals, and various spellings of the same word. But the Company's correspondence shows much the same characteristics, which were part of common usage in ordinary writing. Kelsey's *yt* was *that*, *ye* was *the*, *ym* was *them* and *wch* was *which*, common enough abbreviations at the time. Such things cannot be set down to carelessness or ignorance. It was a day in which a great many people could neither read nor write. The journals of some educated fur traders long after Kelsey's day show as great a deviation from what we would regard as proper standards.

We think of Kelsey as belonging to the West, but he was far to the south and east when he was on James Bay, which lies between Quebec and Ontario, and is not more than one third of the way across Canada. Eastmain on the east side of the Bay, is in Quebec and almost due north of Toronto. Albany on the west side is in Ontario. The curriculum which Kelsey drew up, and which he put into effect by teaching it himself when he was on James Bay, gives him more than a geographical connection with the East. More than an individual effort, it was an authorized educational programme approved by the Company—the only authority in the country.

At that time the Battle on the Heights of Abraham was still fifty years in the future, few white people were on the St. Lawrence and Ontario was a virgin wilderness. Kelsey's classes at Albany mark the beginning of education in Ontario and west of the St. Lawrence. The rude log hut in which he taught was the forerunner of all the schools, colleges and universities that have been built there since.

Kelsey knew at least two Indian tongues, and just before he finally left Hudson Bay we find him engaged in a study of Ekimo. With his facility for languages he probably came to have a good working knowledge of French during the two periods in which he was a prisoner in French hands. The last period extended to at least a year. A knowledge of French would make him useful to both his captors and fellow prisoners.

A student all his life, our first teacher and educationalist, Henry Kelsey well deserves to be remembered in our schools for more than his discovery of the prairies.

CHAPTER 26

TRIUMPHS AND TRIALS

*"Two out of many ventures
That sailed with hopes as high
My own have had the better trade
And Admiral am I"*

— Kipling

WITH the end of the Marlborough wars on the continent, the disastrous Treaty of Ryswick was replaced by the Treaty of Utrecht, and the trade and territory that had been lost were handed back to the English. After the long absence, great preparations were made in London for the return to the Hayes and Newson rivers in the summer of 1714. Capt. James Knight was appointed Commissioner, with Henry Kelsey as his Deputy. In part their Commissions read:

"Anne, by the Grace of God, Queen of Great Britain, France, Ireland, Defender of the Faith etc. To our Trusty and Well Beloved Captain Knight and Henry Kelsey Esq. Greeting: To take possession for Us and in Our Name of the said Bay and Streights, Lands, Sea Coasts, Rivers, Places, Fortresses and other Buildings."

The Commissioners, with a French Commissioner included, sailed in the UNION, and on Sunday, Sept. 6th, came to anchor off the mouth of the Hayes River. Kelsey was sent ashore with the Queen's Commission and dispatches for Jeremie, the French Commandant. The transfer took place a few days later. The French delegate read his authority to turn over the Fort, and Capt. Knight read his Commission to receive the same. One flag was hauled down and the other run up, while cannon boomed and the men from the ships, lined up in formation, gave three cheers.

As Kelsey stood at attention, it must have been with a deep sense of personal satisfaction. Just thirty years before, he had arrived on the Bay to begin his apprenticeship. At Fort York, where they were gathered, he had learned the fur trade. From there he had taken his departure to discover

the prairies and there, two years later, he had been welcomed back. Twice he had been taken prisoner and carried off. There too, he had earned flags of truce and surrender.

And now he had returned a central figure in the ceremony of re-occupation, with a Royal Commission behind him authorizing 'Our Well Beloved Henry Kelsey' to act for and in behalf of Her Majesty. Kelsey gives no hint of his feelings, but he would have been less than human to remain unmoved by such an experience. It was an hour of triumph after the long dreary years of hardship and disappointment he had known since first he beheld the barren shores of Hudson Bay.

The French had made little use of the opportunities of their occupation, and the Fort was in a state of collapse. There were other troubles and the next spring the English were flooded out and the stores spoiled. Worse was to follow, for ice conditions were so bad that summer that the supply ships could not get into the estuary and sailed back for England with the trade goods. So they were left with little to exchange for the furs brought so far by the Indians. It was a bitter experience for traders and tribesmen alike, and a poor start after the long absence.

Any plans that Kelsey had were subject to the approval of the Directors, but he does not seem to have thought of returning to the prairies. Perhaps he felt that he knew the country and that little would be gained for the trade by another visit. There is a report that Governor Knight sent Kelsey up the Nelson to explore the country in 1716. The route would be new to him since he had followed the Hayes River and other streams on the way inland in 1690. We do not know how far he went or with what result. Kelsey evidently did not think the journey important, for he makes no mention of it in his "Memorandum of my abode in Hudsons Bay," which was a summary of his service there up to the time of his departure in 1722.

Having been Deputy Governor for four years, Kelsey was appointed Governor in 1718. He now held the most responsible position on the Bay with a wide trade under his care. His prairie journey had been successful, but still in his mind was his unsuccessful trip beyond Churchill in 1689.

Prospects in that country still attracted him, and now that he could do his own planning we find him sailing north in the summer of 1719. He managed to do some small trade with the "Eskimoes" in whale oil and "sea horse teeth," and also brought back two young men that he might learn the language and hear about the country.

As Governor, Kelsey wrote to the Directors about an ambitious plan to winter in the north, but in London they could see no reason for taking such a risk to his own life and the lives of his men. He could make "as much discovery of whales and other Commodities" by going north and returning the same season. They complained that there had been very little copper or other trade in the north and they hoped for more encouragement soon. Kelsey had slight support from his superiors for his plan to winter in the north. But he was always a pioneer, and to the last the far horizons called him.

Kelsey could not have been a leader of men and a successful administrator if he had not possessed other qualities than those that made him a friendly and courageous man. That he could be stern is seen in an incident that happened one night when the men were celebrating. He sent a message asking them to quieten down but they merely laughed at the request. Finally Kelsey got out of bed and appearing in person asked them to desist. Too far gone in their cups, they scoffed and continued their "Audacious and insolent manners."

"¹⁷" Two of the ringleaders in what Kelsey called "the riot" appeared before him later and he ordered eleven lashes for one and twenty-four for the other. As Morton, who tells the story, remarks, the punishments were severe, but not more so than was common in the navy of that day.

And Kelsey could also deal with the natives in a forthright manner. When some Creeks raided a band of northern Indians, murdered them, and brought the stolen pelts to trade at the fort Kelsey records

"I told them we would not trade with them and they could go see if they could find any of our goods in that country where they destroyed the natives and that we did

not bring guns and powder and other necessities to destroy mankind but to kill food for them and their families. So they promised to desist."

As Governor, Kelsey insisted that the Company's servants take no advantage of the natives, and he dismissed an officer from his seat on the York Council for firing a gun at an Eskimo and for violence to another with a handspike. Peace and justice were not always won by kind words and easy ways.

As has been noted, Kelsey seems to have had the sea in his blood and may have belonged to a seafaring family. He took readily to salt water, and early in life became an efficient navigator and master of sailing ships. His travels on the prairies, completed when he was twenty two, seem to have been his last land journeys, though this was not by choice. After that his name must be joined with those of the earlier explorers in those northern waters who were all seamen, like Frobisher, Hudson, Button and James.

When challenged to show that it had made any effort to search for a North West Passage. The Company produced, at the enquiry of the Parliamentary Committee in 1749, a list of six ships dispatched to look for a waterway to the Far East. Some of them sailed from England, but two expeditions had gone out from York Port under Henry Kelsey. He was listed as having sailed north on June 19th, 1719, returning on August 10th. On the same ship, the *PROSPEROUS*, Kelsey was shown as having sailed again on June 26th, 1721, returning on September 2nd.

Kelsey's summary of his activities on the Bay bears out the claim that he sailed north in these two years, trading by the way, but does not indicate that he was particularly in search of a North West Passage. No doubt, however, his instructions included some reference to his being on the lookout for such a passage.

It is noteworthy that to support its claim to explorations by both land and sea, before the Parliamentary Committee, the Company relied largely on the record of Kelsey's travels and voyages. Kelsey furnished the Company with

the strongest evidence for its own defence—evidence, particularly for the journey to the prairies, that might have been more effectively used. As the boy who had travelled the virgin prairies and as the man who had navigated the uncharted waters of the north, Henry Kelsey had rendered outstanding service to the Company and his country. But he was unrecognized and almost unnoticed.

After Kelsey returned from his first search for a Northern Passage, the frigate HUDSON BAY went aground and was lost and he records that he narrowly escaped with his life. Instead of abandoning the ship, for which course there appeared to be some excuse, Kelsey stayed with it and managed to salvage most of the cargo, only the provisions being lost. This was particularly hard on the traders and meant that all winter they were short of food, and Kelsey had to move men away from posts where supplies were lowest.

That Kelsey was an efficient navigator and was so regarded, the following story, almost the last in the diary, shows. A sloop had arrived and was anchored off shore. Kelsey went out to her and soon a violent storm arose so that the vessel lost her moorings and drifted helplessly. The captain asked Kelsey to take over but he refused unless the ship was turned adrift. This course the captain took and Kelsey said he would "Endeavor to save our lives and ship and goods." In a long battle with winds and waves in shoal water, a test of seamanship and nerve, he finally succeeded and "Rid out a very hard storm."

As early as 1718 some charges were made against Kelsey, and the Committee wrote him a personal letter bringing these to his notice and hoping that he could make a satisfactory answer. The charges were evidently made by Knight when he was demitting the office of Governor which Kelsey was taking over, and seem to have involved pilfering of furs by the Indians in which Kelsey was blamed for negligence. Evidently the charges could not have been proved, for Kelsey remained as Governor for four years after they were made. He offered a vigorous defence of himself and denied any wrong doing or neglect.

In 1722 the Committee decided to recall Kelsey. It may

have been because he was turning his attention too much to the unprofitable north, or merely because of a change of staff such as went on all the time. His length of service, thirty-eight years, must have exceeded that of any other man, and he was old at fifty-two, as age went in that exacting work and country.

The letter stated that Kelsey had been four years as Deputy Governor and four years as Governor and that it was now thought convenient to bring him home, Mr Melish, whom he evidently knew, was to take his place, and had been instructed to show him all respect until he should sail. Kelsey's last entry on the Bay reads: "Ye Mary arrivd and run aground on ye cross bar sand and Capt Melish came ashore."

From being the youngest apprentice, Kelsey had steadily risen. He had been the first man to be commissioned from the ranks and had ended by being Governor of the Company's wide interests on Hudson Bay. Now, he was leaving for the last time, and with every honour. In London he was well received. But Henry Kelsey had returned to dark days in his own story.

CHAPTER 27

THE SHADOWED END

"Man of the North, your weak regret
Is wasted here, arise and ply
To Freedom and to him your debt
By following where he led the way"
—Whittier

THE north is a world apart and is apt to leave its mark upon those who have been long there. If they have been much alone they may become "bushy", and in any case may find themselves out of harmony with their surroundings when they return to ordinary life. Usually such men lose their immunity to the diseases of civilization and, like the natives, fall easy victims to these, particularly to maladies that affect the lungs.

Kelsey had been nearly forty years on the Bay, the last eight of them continuously. He belonged to the country, and was completely adjusted to the climate, conditions and interests. In a land of few natives and still fewer of his own kind, he was, by virtue of his position, almost a dictator, . . . the centre of all that was done and planned.

Stepping directly out of such a world, Kelsey, at his age, could hardly be expected to fit into life in a settled, crowded land, especially in a city which would be particularly alien to him. His health would most likely be affected, and if he was not actually ill, he would not be very well. He would probably suffer with chest troubles in the winter dampness.

We know very little of Kelsey's story after he returned to England, evidently to London, but what we do know indicates that it followed the frequent pattern. He had difficulty in securing employment. No doubt he was trying every where, and there are records of applications he made to the Company for command of one of the ships sailing for the Bay. It seems that he would have been appointed to the HANNAH, but in February, 1724, the Committee decided not to send her that year. Evidently Kelsey was not on an

active Net but might be called in case extra ships were needed.

The decision regarding the HANNAH must have been a serious blow to Kelsey, who had now been home for a year and a half evidently without employment. This seems to have been the curtain call, and there are no more records about Kelsey himself.

We next come across his name in connection with an application by "Eliu Kelsey widow of Henry Kelsey" asking for help in order to put her son William, into an apprenticeship as a cordwainer. A gratuity of ten guineas was passed in consideration of the services of her late husband. This was in January 1730. Four years later in February, 1734, Mrs. Kelsey was again asking the Company for assistance, this time for another son, John perhaps to put him into an apprenticeship also. She wanted to buy clothing for the lad, "She being wholly incapable to do it herself." A grant of six guineas was made.

We do not know when Kelsey married but there is an entry in the Minute Book for March 8th, 1700, recording a payment to his wife. If he did not marry during his first leave he probably did so when he was back in Eng. and after his second imprisonment by the French, and before he returned to the Bay in 1698. All we know of Kelsey's family is that it consisted of at least two sons. When William entered an apprenticeship in 1730 he would be fourteen or fifteen. The children were evidently young when the father died and unable to share in the support of the home.

The picture of the mother head of the poverty stricken family, which may have consisted of more than two children trying to keep a crust of bread on the table and planning at the same time to fit the lads for some skilled work speaks well of her as a woman of character and the best type of mother. At the end of her resources, she still held to her ideals for the family. But the days must have been long and the heart heavy.

This is the end of the Kelsey story so far as it is now known. Kelsey himself must have died between 1724, when he asked for the command of the HANNAH, and the end of

1729 It was in January of the next year that his widow asked for assistance. Kelsey may have been dead for some years then. The story may yet be fully told, but what happened seems to be plain enough.

There were no benefits for the ill and the unemployed and little care for the unfortunate in Kelsey's day. What help was given needy people was straight charity. Even if by the standards of that day the Company treated Kelsey generously, we are moved by the tragedy and humiliation that shadowed the last days of a brave man who had rendered distinguished service to his kind. At the last we see Henry Kelsey craving leave to do some honest work while his family sank lower into poverty and despair.

Such seem to have been the last days of Henry Kelsey. He was but twenty years of age when he recorded that he felt lonely and friendless on the great plains. But he was probably more lonely tramping the streets of London vainly looking for work, and more hungry and hopeless, than ever he had been on the prairies.

Who knew or cared that the little man going the rounds looking for work had found a vast empire in the West? And in his necessity what reason had he to care about it himself? Henry Kelsey was just another man with a threadbare coat and a hungry look, seeking for a place in life that he might provide for his family.

On Kelsey's route across Saskatchewan I was never out of sight of wheat fields, and when harvest came the grain overflowed all storage space and had to be left in the open. But that meant nothing long ago to the man who had been first to see these same fields. He would probably have given all his discoveries for a single loaf to take back to the cheerless home where the family awaited his arrival and the children cried for bread.

And today, having settled Kelsey's prairies, we are now turning our attention to the hitherto neglected north, following another trail he blazed for us there. Kelsey travelled the Barrens, twice crossed the Precambrian Shield, and his last journey was into the north beyond Churchill,

with an Indian guide to show him where the copper lay. He failed to find it, and almost the last thing his diary records is the determination to go back and winter there in order to look for the copper. He believed the country held great mineral wealth, a faith that had to wait until our own day for justification.

But what did it then matter that Henry Kelsey had trodden endless leagues of virgin forest, and had penetrated the potentially wealthy North, when he had not a stick of wood to make a cheery fire in the black grate? Workless weeks, hunger and raw winter weather are poor companions.

One can imagine him gradually losing ground as the hopeless days slipped slowly past. Perhaps, in his weakened condition, a cold settled and brought on his last illness. And so Henry Kelsey passed on, one would fain hope quietly and without pain.

The late Professor A. S. Morton found a record of the death in London of a Henry Kelsey, a Director of the East India Company, in 1727, about the time our Kelsey died. But he must have been another man, perhaps a relative. It may yet be possible to locate the grave of our Canadian explorer, but a partial search of the old records has yielded no clues. He may have found a pauper's grave, which would make identification even more difficult. But it is not likely that the Company would allow a man who had served it so well to come to such an end.

As it is now, there is no tomb at which we can remember Henry Kelsey, no soil sacred to us because it is mingled with his clay, no shrine where we can pay homage to his work and worth.

Somewhere in London, in an unknown grave, lie the remains of the discoverer and explorer of the Canadian prairies. The eyes that sparkled at the sight of the lordly Saskatchewan rolling east at The Pass and that saw the South Branch near Saskatoon flowing from the open plains to the parklands, the brave unwearied feet that first travelled the plains, the hands that made and raised the first

cross in the West, the dauntless heart that came "to kill no Indian"—all have long since turned to dust.

There are few things to remind us of the lad who was first in the West, but in C.B.K., the call letters of the Prairie Regional Radio Station at Watrous, Saskatchewan, the K stands for his name. It is fitting that a call from Henry Kelsey across the prairies he discovered should wake the people to the labours and prayers of each new day.

Henry Kelsey's true memorial will not be in a stone to mark the dead, but in grateful remembrance in the minds of the living. All hearts will be open at last to MIS TOP ASHISH, the Little Giant of the Prairies, Discoverer and Explorer of the Plains, first in the Canadian West, and the Pioneer of the rugged North.

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James W. Whillans

"First in the West" is a story well told. The style is pleasing, and the argument of the Author in the interpretation of the Kelsey record is convincing. He reveals Kelsey as an alert and willing apprentice, a courageous and competent explorer and traveller, a capable navigator, a successful trader, negotiator and wise administrator. Kelsey's childhood and the circumstances of his later life are shrouded in mystery; but Mr. Whillans has presented him as an authentic personality and the peer of other better known explorers who risked great hazards in their penetration of the frontier.

The author of "First in the West" was a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church in Canada who was born in Scotland, educated there and in Canada and served a number of congregations in the Prairie Provinces but principally in Saskatchewan before going to live in British Columbia.

It is fitting that this book should appear in Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee Year when pioneers are being honoured. And, although he would be the first to object, it seems altogether appropriate to regard this treatise on Kelsey as a memorial also to Reverend James William Whillans who in his years of retirement so generously and enthusiastically dedicated himself to this unselfish task. Only hours after he had completed arrangements with his Edmonton publishers, his mortal remains rested in death. But he did not need to see his book in the 'stalls' to feel that his campaign for Kelsey had ended successfully and that he himself was free to set out on his own last great adventure.

F. HEDLEY AULD,
Chancellor of the
University of Saskatchewan.

Regina, Sask.,
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